

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "MARY BARTON."

CHAPTER V.

A FEW days afterwards Ellinor's father be-thought himself that some further communication ought to take place between himself and his daughter's lover on the subject of the approval of the family of the latter to the young man's engagement, and he accordingly wrote a very gentlemanly letter, saying that of course he trusted that Ralph had informed his own father of his engagement; that Mr. Corbet was well known to Mr. Wilkins by reputation, holding the position he did in Shropshire, but that, as Mr. Wilkins did not pretend to be in the same station of life, Mr. Corbet might possibly never even have heard of his name, although in his own county it was well known as having been for generations that of the principal conveyancer and land-agent of —shire; that his wife had been a member of the old knightly family of Holsters, and that he himself was descended from a younger branch of the South Wales De Wintons, or Wilkins; that Ellinor, as his only child, would naturally inherit all his property, but that, in the mean time, of course some settlement upon her would be made, the nature of which might be decided nearer the time of the marriage.

It was a very good straightforward letter, and well fitted for the purpose to which Mr. Wilkins knew it would be applied—of being forwarded to Mr. Ralph Corbet's father. One would have thought that it was not an engagement so disproportioned in equality of station as to cause any great opposition on that score; but, unluckily, Captain Corbet, the heir and eldest son, had just formed a similar engagement with Lady Maria Brabant, the daughter of one of the proudest earls in —shire, one who had always resented Mr. Wilkins's appearance on the field as an insult to the county, and ignored his presence at every dinner-table where they met. Lady Maria was staying at the Corbets at the very time when Ralph's letter, enclosing Mr. Wilkins's, reached the paternal halls, and she merely repeated her father's opinions when Mrs. Corbet and her daughters naturally questioned her as to who these Wilkinses were; they remembered the name in Ralph's letters formerly;

the father was some friend of Mr. Ness's, the clergyman with whom Ralph had read; they believed Ralph used to dine with these Wilkinses sometimes along with Mr. Ness.

Lady Maria was a good-natured girl, and meant no harm in repeating her father's words, touched up, it is true, by some of the dislike she herself felt to the intimate alliance proposed, which would make her sister-in-law to the daughter of an "upstart attorney," "not received in the county," "always trying to push his way into the set above him," "claiming connexion with the De Wintons of — Castle, who, as she well knew, only laughed when he was spoken of, and said they were more rich in relations than they were aware of"—"not people papa would ever like her to know, whatever might be the family connexion."

These little speeches told in a way the girl who uttered them did not intend they should. Mrs. Corbet and her daughters set themselves violently against this foolish entanglement of Ralph's; they would not call it an engagement. They argued, and they urged, and they pleaded, till the squire, anxious for peace at any price, and always more under the sway of the people who were with him, however unreasonable they might be, rather than of the absent, even though the latter had the wisdom of Solomon or the prudence and sagacity of his son Ralph, wrote an angry letter, saying that, as Ralph was of age, of course he had a right to please himself, therefore all his father could say was that the engagement was not at all what either he or Ralph's mother had expected or hoped; that it was a degradation to the family just going to ally themselves with a peer of James the First's creation; that of course Ralph must do what he liked, but that if he married this girl he must never expect to have her received by the Corbets of Corbet Hall as a daughter. The squire was rather satisfied with his production, and took it to show it to his wife; but she did not think it was strong enough, and added a little postscript:

"Dear Ralph,—Though, as second son, you are entitled to Bromley at my death, yet I can do much to make the estate worthless. Hitherto, regard for you has prevented my taking steps as to sale of timber, &c., which would materially increase your sister's portions; this just measure

I shall infallibly take if I find you persevere in keeping to this silly engagement. Your father's disapproval is always a sufficient reason to allege."

Ralph was annoyed at the receipt of these letters, though he only smiled as he locked them up in his desk.

"Dear old father! how he blusters! As to my mother, she is reasonable when I talk to her. Once give her a definite idea of what Ellinor's fortune will be, and let her, if she chooses, cut down her timber—a threat she has held over me ever since I knew what a rocking-horse was, and which I have known to be illegal these ten years past—and she'll come round. I know better than they do how Reginald has run up post-obits, and as for that vulgar high-born Lady Maria they are all so full of, why, she is a Flanders mare to my Ellinor, and has not a silver penny to cross herself with, besides! I bide my time, you dear good people!"

He did not think it necessary to reply to these letters immediately, nor did he even allude to their contents in his to Ellinor. Mr. Wilkins, who had been very well satisfied with his own letter to the young man, and had thought that it must be equally agreeable to every one, was not at all suspicious of any disapproval because the fact of a distinct sanction on the part of Mr. Ralph Corbet's friends to his engagement was not communicated to him.

As for Ellinor, she trembled all over with happiness. Such a summer for the blossoming of flowers and ripening of fruit had not been known for years: it seemed to her as if bountiful loving Nature wanted to fill the cup of Ellinor's joy to overflowing, and as if everything, animate and inanimate, sympathised with her happiness. Her father was well, and apparently content. Miss Monro was very kind. Dixon's lameness was quite gone off. Only Mr. Dunster came creeping about the house, on pretence of business, seeking out her father, and disturbing all his leisure with his dust-coloured parchment-skinned careworn face, and seeming to disturb the smooth current of her daily life whenever she saw him.

Ellinor made her appearance at the Hamley assemblies, but with less éclat than either her father or her lover expected. Her beauty and natural grace were admired by those who could discriminate; but to the greater number there was (what they called) "a want of style"—want of elegance there certainly was not, for her figure was perfect, and though she moved shyly, she moved well. Perhaps it was not a good place for a correct appreciation of Miss Wilkins; some of the old dowagers thought it a piece of presumption for her to be there at all—but the Lady Holster of the day (who remembered her husband's quarrel with Mr. Wilkins, and looked away whenever Ellinor came near) resented this opinion. "Miss Wilkins is descended from Sir Frank's family, one of the oldest in the county; the objection might have

been made years ago to the father, but as he had been received, she did not know why Miss Wilkins was to be alluded to as out of her place." Ellinor's greatest enjoyment in the evening was to hear her father say, after all was over, and they were driving home,

"Well, I thought my Nelly the prettiest girl there, and I think I know some other people who would have thought the same if they could have spoken out."

"Thank you, papa," said Ellinor, squeezing his hand, which she held. She thought he alluded to the absent Ralph as the person who would have agreed with him, had he had the opportunity of seeing her; but no, he seldom thought much of the absent, but had been rather flattered by seeing Lord Hildebrand take up his glass for the apparent purpose of watching Ellinor.

"Your pearls, too, were as handsome as any in the room, child—but we must have them re-set; the sprays are old-fashioned now. Let me have them to-morrow to send up to Hancock."

"Papa, please, I had rather keep them as they are—as mamma wore them."

He was touched in a minute.

"Very well, darling. God bless you for thinking of it."

But he ordered her a set of sapphires instead, for the next assembly.

These balls were not such as to intoxicate Ellinor with success, and make her in love with gaiety. Large parties came from the different country-houses in the neighbourhood, and danced with each other. When they had exhausted the resources they brought with them, they had generally a few dances to spare for the friends of the same standing with whom they were the most intimate. Ellinor, coming with her father, and joining an old card-playing dowager, by way of a chaperone—the said dowager being under old business obligations to the firm of Wilkins and Son, and apologising to all her acquaintances for her own weak condescension to Mr. Wilkins's foible in wishing to introduce his daughter into society above her natural sphere. It was upon this lady, after she had uttered some such speech as this I have just mentioned, that Lady Holster had come down with the pedigree of Ellinor's mother. But though the old dowager had drawn back, a little discomfited at my lady's reply, she was not more attentive to Ellinor in consequence. She allowed Mr. Wilkins to bring in his daughter and place her on the crimson sofa beside her; spoke to her occasionally in the interval that elapsed before the rubbers could be properly arranged in the card-room; invited the girl to accompany her to that sober amusement, and on Ellinor's declining, and preferring to remain with her father, the dowager left her with a sweet smile on her plump countenance, and an approving conscience somewhere within her portly frame, assuring her that she had done all that could possibly have been expected from her towards "that good Wilkins's daughter." Ellinor stood by her father, watching the dances,

and thankful for the occasional chance of a dance. While she had been sitting by her chaperone, Mr. Wilkins had made the tour of the room, dropping out the little fact of his daughter's being present wherever he thought the seed likely to bring forth the fruit of partners. And some came because they liked Mr. Wilkins, and some asked Ellinor because they had done their duty dances to their own party, and might please themselves. So that Miss Wilkins usually had an average of one invitation to every three dances : and this principally towards the end of the evening.

But considering her real beauty, and the care which her father always took about her appearance, she met with far less than her due of admiration. Admiration she did not care for; partners she did; and sometimes felt mortified when she had to sit or stand quiet during all the first part of the evening. If it had not been for her father's wishes she would much rather have stayed at home; but, nevertheless, she talked even to the irresponsible old dowager, and fairly chattered to her father when she got to him, because she did not like him to fancy that she was not enjoying herself.

And, indeed, she had so much happiness in the daily course of this part of her life, that, on looking back on it afterwards, she could not imagine anything brighter than it had been. The delight of receiving her lover's letters—the anxious happiness of replying to them (always a little bit fearful lest she should not express herself and her love in the precisely happy medium becoming a maiden)—the father's love and satisfaction in her—the calm prosperity of the whole household was delightful at the time, and, looking back upon it, it was dream-like.

Occasionally Mr. Corbet came down to see her. He always slept on these occasions at Mr. Ness's; but he was at Ford Bank the greater part of the one day between two nights that he allowed himself for the length of his visits. And even these short peeps were not frequently taken. He was working hard at law; fagging at it tooth and nail; arranging his whole life so as best to promote the ends of his ambition; feeling a delight in surpassing and mastering his fellows—those who started in the race at the same time. He read Ellinor's letters over and over again; nothing else beside law-books. He perceived the repressed love hidden away in subdued expressions in his mistress's communications, with an amused pleasure at the attempt at concealment. He was glad that her guaieties were not more gay; he was glad that she was not too much admired, although a little indignant at the want of taste on the part of the —shire gentlemen. But if other admirers had come prominently forwards, he should have had to take some more decided steps to assert his rights than he had hitherto done; for he had caused Ellinor to express a wish to her father that her engagement might not be too much talked about until nearer the time when it would be prudent for him to

marry her. He thought that the knowledge of this, the only imprudently hasty step he ever meant to take in his life, might go against his character for wisdom, if the fact was known while he was as yet only a student. Mr. Wilkins wondered a little; but acceded, as he always did, to any of Ellinor's requests. Mr. Ness was a confidant, of course, and some of Lady Maria's connexions heard of it, and forgot it again very soon; and, as it happened, no one else was sufficiently interested in Ellinor to care to ascertain the fact.

All this time, Mr. Ralph Corbet maintained a very quietly decided attitude towards his own family. He was engaged to Miss Wilkins; and all he could say was that he was sorry that they disapproved of it. He was not able to marry just at present, and before the time for his marriage arrived he trusted that his own family would take a more reasonable view of things, and be willing to receive her as his wife with all becoming respect or affection. This was the substance of what he repeated in different forms in reply to his father's angry letters. At length his invariable determination made way with his father; the paternal thunderings were subdued to a distant rumbling in the sky; and presently the inquiry was broached as to how much fortune Miss Wilkins would have; how much down on her marriage; what were the eventual probabilities. Now this was a point on which Mr. Ralph Corbet wished himself to be informed upon. He had not thought much about it in making the engagement; he had been too young, or too much in love. But an only child of a wealthy attorney ought to have something considerable; and an allowance so as to enable the young couple to start housekeeping in a moderately good part of town, would be an advantage to him in his profession. So he replied to his father, adroitly suggesting that a letter containing certain modifications of the inquiry which had been rather roughly put in Mr. Corbet's last, should be sent to him, in order that he might himself ascertain from Mr. Wilkins what were Ellinor's prospects as regarded fortune.

The desired letter came; but not in such a form that he could pass it on to Mr. Wilkins; he preferred to make quotations, and even these quotations were a little altered and dressed before he sent them on. The gist of his letter to Mr. Wilkins was this. He stated that he hoped soon to be in a position to offer Ellinor a home; that he anticipated a steady progress in his profession, and consequently in his income; but that contingencies might arise, as his father suggested, which would deprive him of the power of earning a livelihood, perhaps when it might be more required than it would be at first; that it was true that, after his mother's death, a small estate in Shropshire would come to him as second son, and of course Ellinor would receive the benefit of this property, secured to her legally as Mr. Wilkins thought best—that being a matter for after discussion—but that at present his

father was anxious, as might be seen from the extract, to ascertain whether Mr. Wilkins could secure him from the contingency of having his son's widow and possible children thrown upon his hands, by giving Ellinor a dowry; and if so, it was gently insinuated, what would be the amount of the same.

When Mr. Wilkins received this letter it startled him out of a happy day-dream. He liked Ralph Corbet and the whole connexion quite well enough to give his consent to an engagement; and sometimes even he was glad to think that Ellinor's future was assured, and that she would have a protector and friends after he was dead and gone. But he did not want them to assume their responsibilities so soon. He had not distinctly contemplated her marriage as an event likely to happen before his death. He could not understand how his own life would go on without her: or indeed why she and Ralph Corbet could not continue just as they were at present. He came down to breakfast with the letter in his hand. By Ellinor's blushes, as she glanced at the handwriting, he knew that she had heard from her lover by the same post; by her tender caresses—caresses given as if to make up for the pain which the prospect of her leaving him was sure to give him—he was certain that she was aware of the contents of the letter. Yet he put it in his pocket, and tried to forget it.

He did this not merely from his reluctance to complete any arrangements which might facilitate Ellinor's marriage. There was a further annoyance connected with the affair. His money matters had been for some time in an involved state; he had been living beyond his income, even reckoning that, as he always did, at the highest point at which it ever touched. He kept no regular accounts, reasoning with himself—or, perhaps, I should rather say persuading himself—that there was no great occasion for regular accounts, when he had a steady income coming in from his profession, as well as the interest of a good sum of money left him by his father; and when his expenditure, living in his own house near a country town where provisions were cheap, for his small family—only one child—could never amount to anything like his incomings from the above-mentioned sources. But servants and horses, and choice wines and rare fruit-trees, and a habit of purchasing any book or engraving he might take a fancy to, irrespective of the price, run away with money, even though there be but one child. A year or two ago Mr. Wilkins had been startled into a system of exaggerated retrenchment—retrenchment which only lasted about six weeks—by the sudden bursting of a bubble speculation, in which he had invested a part of his father's savings. But as soon as the change in his habits, necessitated by his new economies, became irksome, he had comforted himself for his relapse into his former easy extravagance of living, by remembering the fact that Ellinor was engaged to the son of a man of large property; and that though Ralph

was only the second son, yet that his mother's estate must come to him, as Mr. Ness had already informed Ellinor's father, on first hearing of her engagement.

Mr. Wilkins did not doubt that he could easily make Ellinor a fitting allowance, or even pay down a requisite dowry; but the doing so would involve an examination into the real state of his affairs, and this involved distasteful trouble. He had no idea how much more than mere temporary annoyance would arise out of the investigation. Until it was made, he decided in his own mind that he would not speak to Ellinor on the subject of her lover's letter. So, for the next few days, she was kept in suspense, seeing little of her father; and during the short times that she was with him, she was made aware that he was nervously anxious to keep the conversation engaged on general topics rather than on the one which she had at heart. Mr. Corbet had written to her by the same post as that on which he sent the letter, of which I have already spoken, to her father, telling her of its contents, and begging her (in all those sweet words which lovers know how to use) to urge her father to compliance for his sake—his, her lover's—who was pining and lonely in all the crowds of London, since her loved presence was not there. He did not care for money, save as for a means of hastening their marriage: indeed, if there were only some income fixed, however small; some time for their marriage fixed, however distant, he could be patient. He did not want superfluity of wealth; his habits were simple, as she well knew; and money enough would be theirs in time, both from her share of contingencies, and the certainty of his finally possessing Bromley.

Ellinor delayed replying to this letter until her father should have spoken to her on the subject. But as she perceived that he avoided all such conversation, the young girl's heart failed her. She began to blame herself for wishing to leave him, to reproach herself for being accessory to any step which made him shun being alone with her, and look distressed and full of care as he did now. It was the usual struggle between father and lover for the possession of love, instead of the natural and graceful resignation of the parent to the prescribed course of things; and, as usual, it was the poor girl who bore the suffering for no fault of her own: although she blamed herself for being the cause of the disturbance in the previous order of affairs. Ellinor had no one to speak to confidentially but her father and her lover, and when they were at issue she could talk openly to neither, so she brooded over Mr. Corbet's unanswered letter, and her father's silence, and became pale and dispirited. Once or twice she looked up suddenly, and caught her father's eye gazing upon her with a certain wistful anxiety; but the instant she saw this he pulled himself up, as it were, and would begin talking gaily about the small topics of the day.

At length Mr. Corbet grew impatient at not hearing either from Mr. Wilkins or Ellinor, and wrote urgently to the former, making known to him a new proposal suggested to him by his father, which was, that a certain sum should be paid down by Mr. Wilkins, which should be applied, under the management of trustees, to the improvement of the Bromley estate, out of the profits of which, or other sources in the elder Mr. Corbet's hands, a heavy rate of interest should be paid on this money, which would secure an income to the young couple immediately, and considerably increase the value of the estate upon which Ellinor's settlement was to be made. The terms offered for this laying down of ready money were so advantageous that Mr. Wilkins was strongly tempted to accede to them at once; as Ellinor's pale cheek and want of appetite had only that very morning smote upon his conscience, and this immediate transfer of ready money was, as a sacrifice, a soothing balm to his self-reproach, and laziness and dislike to immediate unpleasantness of action had its counterbalancing weakness in imprudence. Mr. Wilkins made some rough calculations on a piece of paper—deeds, and all such tests of accuracy being down at the office—discovered that he could pay down the sum required; wrote a letter agreeing to the proposal, and before he sealed it called Ellinor into his study, and bade her read what he had been writing, and tell him what she thought of it. He watched the colour come rushing into her white face, her lips quiver and tremble, and even before the letter was ended she was in his arms, kissing him, and thanking him with blushing caresses rather than words.

"There, there!" said he, smiling and sighing; "that will do. Why, I do believe you took me for a hard-hearted father, just like a heroine's father in a book. You've looked as wobegone this week past as Ophelia. One can't make up one's mind in a day about such sums of money as this, little woman; and you should have let your old father have time to consider."

"Oh, papa! I was only afraid you were angry."

"Well, if I was a bit perplexed, seeing you look so ill and pining was not the way to bring me round. Old Corbet, I must say, is trying to make a good bargain for his son. It is well for me that I have never been an extravagant man."

"But, papa, we don't want all this much."

"Yes, yes! it is all right. You shall go into their family as a well-portioned girl, if you can't go as a Lady Maria. Come, don't trouble your little head any more about it. Give me one more kiss, and then we'll go and order the horses, and have a ride together, by way of keeping holiday. I deserve a holiday, don't I, Nelly?"

Some country people at work at the roadside, as the father and daughter passed along, stopped to admire their bright happy looks, and one spoke of the hereditary handsomeness of the Wilkins family (for the old man, the present Mr. Wilkins's father, had been fine-looking in

his drab breeches and gaiters, and usual assumption of a yeoman's dress). Another said it was easy for the rich to be handsome; they had always plenty to eat, and could ride when they were tired of walking, and had no care for the morrow to keep them from sleeping at nights. And in sad acquiescence with their contrasted lot, the men went on with their hedging and ditching in silence.

And yet, if they had known—if the poor did know—the troubles and temptations of the rich; if those men had foreseen the lot darkening over the father, and including the daughter in its cloud; if Mr. Wilkins himself had even imagined such a future possible . . . Well, there was truth in the old heathen saying, "Let no man be envied till his death."

Ellinor had no more rides with her father; no, not ever again; though they had stopped that afternoon at the summit of a breezy common, and looked at a ruined hall, not so very far off, and discussed whether they could reach it that day, and decided that it was too far away for anything but a hurried inspection, and that some day soon they would make the old place into the principal object of an excursion. But a rainy time came on, when no rides were possible; and whether it was the influence of the weather, or some other care or trouble that oppressed him, Mr. Wilkins seemed to lose all wish for much active exercise, and rather sought a stimulus to his spirits and circulation in wine. But of this Ellinor was innocently unaware. He seemed dull and weary, and sat long, drowsing and drinking after dinner. If the servants had not been so fond of him for much previous generosity and kindness, they would have complained now, and with reason, of his irritability, for all sorts of things seemed to annoy him.

"You should get the master to take a ride with you, miss," said Dixon, one day, as he was putting Ellinor on her horse. "He is not looking well. He is studying too much at the office."

But when Ellinor named it to her father, he rather hastily replied that it was all very well for women to ride out whenever they liked—men had something else to do; and then, as he saw her look grave and puzzled, he softened down his abrupt saying by adding that Dunster had been making a fuss about his partner's non-attendance, and altogether taking a good deal upon himself in a very offensive way, so that he thought it better to go pretty regularly to the office, in order to show him who was master—senior partner, and head of the business, at any rate.

Ellinor sighed a little over her disappointment at her father's preoccupation, and then forgot her own little regret in anger at Mr. Dunster, who had seemed all along to be a thorn in her father's side, and had latterly gained some power and authority over him, the exercise of which Ellinor could not help thinking was a very impudent line of conduct from a junior partner,

so lately only a paid clerk to his superior. There was a sense of something wrong in the Ford Bank household for many weeks about this time. Mr. Wilkins was not like himself, and his cheerful ways and careless genial speeches were missed, even on the days when he was not irritable, and evidently uneasy with himself and all about him. The spring was late in coming, and cold rain and sleet made any kind of out-of-door exercise a trouble and discomfort rather than a bright natural event in the course of the day. All sound of winter gaieties, of assemblies and meets, and jovial dinners, had died away, and the summer pleasures were as yet unthought of. Still Ellinor had a secret perennial spring of sunshine in her heart; whenever she thought of Ralph she could not feel much oppression from the present unspoken and indistinct gloom. He loved her; and oh, how she loved him! and perhaps this very next autumn—but that depended on his own success in his profession. After all, if it was not this autumn it would be the next; and with the letters that she received weekly, and the occasional visits that her lover ran down to Hamley to pay Mr. Ness, Ellinor felt as if she would almost prefer the delay of the time when she must leave her father's for a husband's roof.

SMALL-BEER CHRONICLES.

THE power of prophesying after the event, is one possessed by a large class of persons, and it will doubtless be very easy for future ages to show with great correctness and lucidity how certain characteristics of these present times plainly foreshadowed the events and changes which were to follow them. The task of those prophets who have to deal with matters over which the veil of futurity is yet drawn, is more difficult, and though they may note the events of the day, and speak of them knowingly as "signs of the times," it is not anything like so easy for them to say with precision what sort of "times" these same events are "signs of."

Therefore it is that when, as is sometimes inevitable, I pass from the chronicling of those changes in our manners of which we are taking note, to certain inferences apparently deducible from them, I ask, even more than at other times, for great indulgence.

How is it faring, in this age, with what we ordinarily call "the Picturesque?" How is it faring with "the Poetical?" According to all our received notions, it is faring ill with both the one and the other.

Is there any one invention of modern times which has added anything to the picturesqueness of the age? Nay, is there one which has not rather detracted from it?

The same questions may be asked as to the influence of all recent changes on the Poetical element. In both cases, according to our received notions, I think it must be answered that what are popularly called "modern institu-

tions" have been unfriendly alike to the Picturesque and to the Poetical.

"According to our received notions." That there may be even now, and that there will be hereafter, inherent in these same institutions a Picturesqueness and a Poetry of their own, I am far from denying; but it is separate from what we have hitherto delighted in, and we must, before we can see or appreciate it, part with many cherished associations, and with many beloved prejudices which we have been used to hug to our hearts.

The Poetical and the Picturesque are so nearly related to each other, that, in examining into their present position and future prospects, we may legitimately treat of them for the most part together.

The other day, the following paragraph appeared in the newspaper: "In consequence of the great destruction by wolves of sheep grazing on the mountains of Ax, in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, the mayor of Savignac, after several ineffectual attempts to hunt them down with packs of hounds, determined to try strychnine, in order to rid the country of these voracious animals. Two wolves were found dead the first night after the poison was laid. Seven foxes were the next victims; and subsequently two large wolves. Encouraged by this success, the mayors of the neighbouring communes determined to try strychnine, and by the end of the year the sheep in the mountains were suffered to graze without being molested." Now, how like this announcement is to the age we live in. What a romantic thing was the old wolf-hunt! How picturesque was everything connected with it! There was a spice of danger about it too, to make it more attractive. Practically, however, it did not answer, and so away with it, and let us treat the wolves upon the mountain-side as we do the black-beetles in the kitchen. Oh, Schneyders, it was well for you to die when you did! Your occupation's gone, and the grocer steps in with his "Celebrated Paste for Poisoning Wolves," and the advertisement comes out, "Why Keep Wolf-hounds?" Why indeed? The object is attained more easily, more economically, more completely, upon the black-beetle system. We think now—for we are sensible people—of the object to be attained, not of the process of attaining it. When we shoot, for instance, our object is to kill game, and that is sooner gained by employing beaters than by hunting with pointers; when we travel, we only wish to be conveyed from one spot on the earth's surface to another as quickly as possible, and the pleasures of the actual transit are over for us. I wonder if we shall ever fight our battles with strychnine, or discharge a volley of poison-vapour into the columns of the enemy "with terrific effect"?

How long ago was it that the great Naval Review took place at Portsmouth? Fifteen, eighteen, twenty years, perhaps. We talk of signs of the times. What a sign of the times that was! The great sham fight took place well out at sea, and we on shore could see

nothing of it, though we could hear distinctly enough the booming of the cannon. When it was over, the steamers made the best of their way back to Portsmouth, but there was no sign of the sailing ships, the magnificent men-of-war that trusted to canvas for their means of progression. At last, and just as the sun was setting, first one and then another of them appeared upon the far-off horizon. Behind time, behind the age, almost stationary in the evening calm, they showed there all together, a cloud of white, turned into a creamy rose-colour by the setting sun. It was the dawning of the end of one phase of the Picturesque. I do believe that there was never any more beautiful thing seen than that, nor anything more exquisitely and touchingly suggestive. Those great pyramids of white looked in the distance so unsubstantial, so unreal and pure, that they seemed like the ghosts of the old Fleet appearing once and for the last time in more than accustomed majesty and beauty. The sun lighted them up as it set, and then it went down, and a thoughtful man might have deemed that if this were the end—as it virtually was—of the old man-of-war, the veteran died a glorious death, and submitted to a resistless fate with matchless dignity.

It would not be well to let THE OLD SHIP pass from the world of waters without a word of respectful and loving farewell. It was the Ship in which, in David's time, men "went down to the sea." It was the Ship which Horace viewed with mistrust; the Ship in which Columbus found his way to the New World; the Ship that was wrecked in Shakespeare's Tempest; and, descending to more modern times, the Ship in which our favourite national hero fought and conquered—the Ship on whose deck Nelson fell wounded, and in which he breathed his last. It is gone. "Deeper than ever plummet sound," it is sunk from our view, and we shall see it no more. It had a long life, and died a noble death, and has left a glorious memory.

It is really curious to observe how, almost invariably, every one of the inventions peculiar to modern times is apparently mimical to the picturesque. As to steam, its animosity to the beautiful is proverbial. Not only does the railroad itself disfigure the country through which it passes, but all things connected with it are also distressing to the cultivated eye. What a thing a station is for "freezing the genial current of the soul." A railway hotel, again—is that picturesque? And then that modern institution, the funnel; how completely the most beautiful ship is spoiled by the shortest and least conspicuous funnel that ingenuity can devise. There is no hiding it, no disguising it. But it is no use talking about steam, it is an acknowledged offender in this way, and there is no more to be said about it. The telegraph, again, is a modern invention, its straight poles and horizontal wires do not add to the picturesqueness of our scenery. The photograph, too. Clap down a photographic studio on any spot of

ground in town or country, and that spot of ground, or that house-top, if you prefer it, is blasted and rendered hideous. As to the effect of this invention on human picturesqueness, if I may be allowed the expression, it is terrific. Who now-a-days hears celebrated beauties talked of? When does a whole opera-house full of people rise when a celebrated beauty enters her box? The public have seen the photographs of these beauties in the shop-windows and are disenchanted.

An omnibus, again, is a comparatively modern invention, so is a cab, so is a policeman. How piteously unpicturesque are all three of them. Has the reader—but of course he has—ever seen an omnibus passing along a country road on its way to a station to meet the down-train? What a combination of things. To speak of such modern institutions as the street cab, or the policeman, at any length, would be as unnecessary as to dwell on the full horror of the perambulator. These hideous objects need only a glance apiece to convince us that they have done what in them lies to put an end to the Picturesque.

One Sunday afternoon, not long ago, I was rambling alone in a very beautiful part of the county of Kent, and enjoying the scenery as those do who have few opportunities of getting away from a city's smoke, when I suddenly emerged from a little wood, through which I had made my way with difficulty, into a large field which lay beyond the limits of the wood. It gave me a shock to see in the middle of that field a great locomotive engine with its wheels deeply embedded in mud, and with a considerable lurch over to one side, where I suppose the ground was softest. It was Sunday, and the machine was not working, nor was there any human being in the field, or, indeed, anywhere within sight. Over against the engine, but at a considerable distance, were a couple of grim iron ploughing instruments, which it was the business of the engine to drag across the different parts of the field by means of twisted metal ropes. They had been left, when it was time to give up working the night before, arrested in mid-career. They had savagely torn up a good mass of earth, and worried it, and they seemed to be looking towards the locomotive with ferocious eagerness, like chained bull-dogs longing for their master to give the signal for beginning again. All round the field, monstrous pegs of iron—their heads all split and broken with ferocious blows—were dug deep into the earth. The wire-twisted ropes were passed round them, so that the two bull-dog-looking machines could be dragged over all parts of the enclosure without the necessity of shifting the locomotive. Some of these iron ropes were even carried into my little wood and secured round the trunks of the trees, in order to get a firmer purchase. The whole thing looked ruinous, disconsolate, truculent, and wicked. And not only was this particular field, in which the machinery lay, rendered hideous by it, but even the country which I had just before been

admiring, seemed contaminated too. It was a bad business.

But a day or two before that, as the winter sun was setting, I watched, upon a certain rising ground, another kind of machine at work. It was the old plough. Two old horses, wholly free from the infectious hurry of the age, and an old labourer, to whose movements the pace of those worthy animals was peculiarly well adapted, were engaged in working this ancient machine. How slowly it made its way along the hill-side! How long each furrow was in the making, and at the end of each what a good opportunity for rest as the turn was made! The slow undulating movement of the plough had something infinitely graceful in it. The earth was lifted gently and graciously and as if it were touched by friends—not torn and lacerated by the teeth of enemies. There was peace here. It was all in harmony; in harmony with the cawing of the mighty flight of crows, in harmony with the bare trees, with the little brown woods, with the golden clouds—with the mind of the chance wayfarer who paused to look and listen. He could scarcely be better employed than in so looking and so listening, for the scene and all its accompaniments were perfect. Eye and ear were both made happy. In this chord there was no one jarring note to spoil the melody. Can a time ever come when the jar of the steam-engine will assimilate with a lovely scene, and when the clatter of the thrashing-machine will mar the pleasure of a winter ramble no more than the measured thump of the flail? The thrashing-machine may separate the wheat from the straw better than the flail, the ploughing-machine may turn up a whole field in an incredibly short time, but these things will never harmonise with nature, and if we get to be indifferent to them, and to admire nature in spite of them, that is the very utmost that we may venture to hope for.

The interests of the Poetical and of the Picturesque are both concerned in this agricultural-implement question. There was, until lately, both poetry and picturesqueness mixed up with almost every agricultural pursuit. If steam-farming is to go on and prosper, it can be so no longer. And doubtless it will go on, and will prosper; and the beautiful, as is usual, and I suppose right, will fall before the practical. Alas! I am afraid I must put it on record that the Picturesque is in a bad way. I don't complain. It has had its day. We have enjoyed it long, and it will take a long time to destroy it everywhere. But it is on its last legs. It is inconvenient and unprofitable. I am told, and it is my business to chronicle it, that even the old thatched roof is doomed. It did not answer. It harboured insects. It was dreadfully inflammable, and lo! the new barns are being built with coverings of slate—slate that looks hard, and blue, and cold—slate that never becomes beautiful, even with age—slate that the moss and the lichens abhor—slate that is clean, and easily kept in repair, and makes the best roof in the world. Yes,

we are to have farm-houses, and barns, and out-buildings of brimstone-coloured brick and blue slate—good sensible edifices, well in character with the steam-plough and the thrashing-machine.

But how beautiful that old roof was! It was always out of repair—bless it. Half of it at least was covered with patches of dense green moss. The straw stuck out in places where it had been mended. The line of it against the sky, too, was always so irregular, for it was the practice of the wooden structure beneath it to give way here and there, and in those places the thatch would sink, and so a break was made in the line, which would otherwise have been too straight. That was the roof in which the birds could make themselves comfortable, and portions of which vagrant sparrows who lived at a distance could abstract when repairs became necessary in their sylvan residences. They will not find slate so convenient for their purpose. That, too, was the roof of our infant story-books. Little Red Riding-hood's grandmother lived under it. The farmer, guiltless of steam-ploughing, who appeared in the Christmas-piece, welcoming the labourers who were returning with the last harvest-load—this jolly individual always stood at the door of a house with a roof of thatch painted bright yellow, and in a most triumphant state of repair. Lastly, it was in that roof that the dormer-window appeared peeping out of the thatch, with its latticed panes, its clean white curtain, and its frame of fragrant honeysuckle.

I do not despair of seeing the day when we shall have slate roofs to our haystacks—roofs that will lift on and off, and that can be clapped over the newly-made rick, like a dish-cover on a leg of mutton.

The useful is the enemy of the Picturesque. There is no part of a house more agreeable to the eye than its roof—a high roof—a steep roof with gable points. But this is inconvenient. The rooms in that roof are cold, their ceilings are sloping, low in one part, high in another. The dormer-windows, too, built out in the roof's surface, are liable to many objections. You attain a much greater degree of comfort by carrying—as we now do—the wall straight up to the top of the house; your upper rooms have flat ceilings, are rooms, not garrets, are warm and comfortable. But the high roof was the prettiest, for all that.

I hope nobody will imagine for a moment that I am objecting either to steam-agriculture, or to square-topped houses. If by mechanical ploughing and wire-fencing the ends of agriculture are forwarded, we must have steam-ploughs and iron fences. If the slate house-top answers better than the thatch, I am afraid we must own that it would be folly not to adopt it; and if your house is more comfortable with a flat and invisible roof than with a high and sloping one, your choice is soon made; only let us acknowledge that in connexion with our modern improvements there is some loss as well as some gain.

The loss of the old plough, and the old barn, and the old thatched house, is a serious loss. It is a loss of nearly half the attractiveness of rural England. The old forms of agriculture were so inseparable from one's delight in the country. All day long, and at any time of the day, there was something going on that it was pleasant to watch. All day long, the plough, or the harrow, or the reaping-hook and scythe, according to the season, were at work. Winter and summer there was always agricultural work a-doing. And then there was the mid-day rest, and the group of peasants beneath some shady old tree. Imagine the repose of a congregation of engineers and stokers, surrounding a grim locomotive planted in the middle of a half-ploughed field! What a group that would be for a landscape-painter! Plenty of lamp-black would be wanted, at any rate. And when the night fell in the old time, when the labourer unyoked his team, and man and horse went their slow and weary way back to their master's home, when the unbroken colts gathered about the gate that opened on the lane to exchange a passing neigh with their friends who had been at work, the said colts looking vague and enormous in the darkness—and later, when the candle in the old horn lantern was kindled, and was to be seen slowly moving about the farm-yard as the hind visited the different objects of his charge before seeking rest himself—were not all these things associated with happy memories of the country, and does not the mere presence of a steam-engine in one of those out-buildings walk away with at least half of the poetry of the scene? There is a great noisy rampant thrashing-machine, which is always travelling about a certain part of the country with which I am familiar, and which machine goes among the natives by the name of "Puffing Billy." Good Heaven! how that engine mars the landscape as it passes! Horses go raving mad at its approach, and have to be held by the nose as it goes by. Poor things, they know they are powerless against it. "Puffing Billy" could crush them with ease, but what could they do against his iron sides?

It may be that when the first shock inseparable from these great changes is over, when our senses are more accustomed to iron, and smoke, and clatter of machinery, a new Poetry and a new Picturesqueness will become developed. Men even of middle age can hardly expect to see perfectly, these elements in things so different from those with which their softer and younger thoughts were associated. What of the age which grows up free of our ancient memories? What of the age whose children play at driving engines, as we did at coach and horses? They will grow to look upon objects that have been mixed up with their joys and sorrows, their loves and fears, with other eyes than ours. The shriek of the locomotive, and its two glaring eyes, as it tears its way through the darkness, to us already full of a wild picturesqueness of their own, may be to them more romantic than the soft gliding of the gondola; while the Rialto, under which the boat

is drifting, has for them less of poetry than the span of the viaduct, or the darkness of the Alpine tunnel.

Let justice be done though we perish in doing it. Justice to the past whose picturesque and poetical elements we can see without effort; justice also to the present, when those same qualities need to be looked for with earnest, and, above all, with unprejudiced eyes, and are only seen after a victory painfully achieved over many of our strongest antipathies. It is difficult to give up our old ideas, and to accept frankly those that are new and strange; but it is of the last importance that we should acquire the power of doing so. We are for ever shedding some portion of that husk in which our immortality dwells, and to each scale of it, as it drops from us, we cling with a lingering love and regret. Now suppose we try the plan of adapting ourselves to the new things. Suppose—since these changes have taken place, and since it is right that they should take place—suppose we go forward to meet them, and look out for their good qualities rather than their bad. We have just sung a dirge over the old things. But we must not look with a grudging eye on the new things. After all, when one comes to think of it, it is not a certainly ascertained fact that steam is so entirely unpicturesque and unpoetical as we were inclined to make it out just now. There is something that the most exalted poet need not despise, about that great conflict which takes place between fire and water when the steam-ship puts out to sea. There is but a plank between the fire that rules, and the water that reluctantly obeys. And, curiously enough, the very water is in a manner turned against itself, and made to work as the servant of the great furnace which turns it into steam. That triumph of the man over the tremendous elements is a grand thing, and perhaps to the full as poetical as the victory of our patron saint over the dragon. Who knows but that, in reality, that assiduous and intelligent toil of the engineer, who year by year works on to accomplish a task beset by almost invincible difficulties, is as romantic an undertaking as that of the old knight-errant or the crusader? The qualities called into play by such an enterprise as the construction of the new underground railway, are higher qualities than those demanded of the ancient warrior. Patience, endurance, courage, self-denial, perseverance—what demands are made upon all these faculties in the course of such an undertaking! The annals of that enterprise, the deeds of that army of navigators, headed by their various officers, and led on by General Fowler, C.E., might form the argument of a modern epic. Could anything be more romantic than the story of their conflicts with the water-spirits and the gas-demons down in the underground world of London?

The "seeing eye" is what we need. It was this that Turner possessed. Late in his career, when the man was old, and when the prejudices of one of narrower mind would have been at

their strongest, he made a principal object in one of the most poetical pictures that has ever been painted, of a little ignoble tug-boat. The old Temeraire was the Old Ship of acknowledged picturesqueness ; it loses nothing by its near contact with the steam-tug, by which it is towed into port. This great man showed the same liberal desire to move, in his still more recent work, called "Rain, Steam, and Speed," in which he takes a train in movement as the subject of his picture, and shows us what a fine subject it is.

And doubtless as affording proof of the wider extent of man's dominion, and as showing how even such immaterial things as time and space obey it—we may look on steam and electricity as agents whose exercise is to be combined with the highest poetic elements. The night-train tearing its way across the earth's surface is really, when one thinks of what its work is—how it furthers those great ends of commerce which help to bind the nations together—how it brings to the sick man the face which he must see before he dies—how it bears away from home and love the youngster who has his fortune to make, or brings him back, a man, to his reward—when one thinks of such things as these, that sudden gust of light and fire and speed becomes something more than a thing of wheels, and valves, and pistons, and train-oil. And to think that human beings are found who will trust themselves to the mercies of that fiery monster ! What "hearts of oak and girt with threefold brass" would ancient Flaccus, who thought it so courageous to venture on ship-board, have ascribed to the travellers by the night express !

Has it ever happened to the reader to ask a question by means of that essentially modern invention the electric telegraph, and to be opposite to the instrument itself when the answer arrives ? It is not often that one is thus brought into immediate contact with the actual agency by which the information we seek reaches us. Now, with life or death hanging in the scale, or even with some less vital, but still important, interest at stake, how tremendous the suspense would be as word by word—nay, letter by letter—that little quivering needle revealed the truth. There is no more harrowing situation than this possible. From the moment when the little signal is given which announces that the oracle is going to speak, the very instrument itself seems to hold the secret, so that you might long to tear the news from out of it and know the best or the worst more swiftly than it can be told by that timid and hesitating tongue. Across half a continent, and underneath the sea, the news has travelled at maddest speed ; no wonder that it should be faltering and breathless, here at its journey's end.

And so we have said "good-by" to the old Picturesque, and with tears in our eyes, as we parted with memories most precious to us, have yet managed so to master our prejudices that we have been able to say a word of welcome to the

Poetry of the new age, though it comes to us in rather an ungainly shape, and trampling to pieces the things that we have delighted in for half a lifetime. In this rapidly moving age it is a positive duty to go forward in matters of taste as in things of more importance. You may, and you probably must, continue to love your old friends best, but that is no excuse for looking grudgingly on the new acquaintances who are to supply the vacant places of the dead. These new comers have their fine qualities as the others had, and it behoves you, if you would be a true man, to acknowledge those qualities, and to do them justice to the very utmost of your power.

SERVANTS IN PERSIA.

My right-hand man and prime counsellor in all things, next to my English servant Harry, is Mehemet Beg, one of the Gholaums, or government messengers of her Majesty's mission at Tehran. He is a fine fellow, and has passed his life on horseback. He accompanied poor Conolly and Stoddart on their ill-fated journey to Bokhara, and we are the best friends in the world.

He is said to be past sixty years of age, but he looks scarcely thirty. He has a rich bronzed complexion, fine dark bright eyes, a good nose and mouth, and a wonderful beard. He is as active as an acrobat, and as brave as a lion. Very fierce when crossed, and very ready with his stick at all times. In manners he is a curious mixture of the soldier and old woman. He is cruel, kind, rough, tender ; his heart is at once that of a conqueror and of a child. I love him—I am angry with him. He bores and he pleases me by turns. He is officious in the wrong place, and in the right place. He is never sulky ; but he has a way of his own in doing things, and is not to be turned aside from his way. Other people say he is troublesome. He is proud of his office, and considers his functions of the utmost importance to the welfare of the world at large. Whenever we travel and rest for a day, he appears sublime in silks and shawls and bravery ; so that it would be quite impossible to ask him to do anything but smoke out of my gold pipe : which he does with much zest and condescension, flattering me adroitly and sententiously between every puff. He takes as much care of me as a grandmother, and in about the same sort of way. He doses me at all hours of the day with sweet tea, and pipes—of which he is himself very fond ; and he has me rubbed down and shampooed as much as himself, every evening, to take off the stiffness of the day's ride, though I do not want my joints pulled and twisted and cracked, and my muscles kneaded back into elasticity, as much as he does. My mind seems also under his charge as well as my personal safety. He gossips to me eternally, and tells me all sorts of fibs to put me in a good humour.

And here, I must leave Mehemet Beg to take

his ease in his gorgeous attire and continue his splendid smoke ; for the mention of shampooing and gossip forces me to describe a Persian bath and bath servants.

A bath in the East, and especially in Persia, is usually the chief gossip-shop of a city. Folks go there as they go to a club in Europe. It is the great excuse of everybody. "I want to go to the bath," is in Persia, what "Brown's business, you know, my dear!" or "The City!" is to truant husbands in England. People pass the whole day there. It is especially a ladies' club and scandal-shop. The Anderoon politics all go on at the bath, and the cruel murder of the Ameer was planned there. The looties and dandies call daily at the bath, if only for a few minutes. When a physician asks his patient if he has not been indulging too much in the warm bath, he means to inquire whether his nerves have not been shattered by debauchery. The warm bath is merely another word for dissipation ; it is, in fact, a stew.

The bath is, perhaps, the principal feature of every-day life in Persia. A trumpet is blown early in the morning, to announce that it is heated, and many people use this fact as a pretext for sitting up all night carousing, lest they should oversleep themselves and not hear the sound. Folks go to the bath not because they want to get washed, but because they want to know the news of the town. If they wanted seriously to become clean—an idea, by the way, which never appears to enter into the imagination of anybody in Persia—the bath would be the very worst place they could go to for the purpose. For, there exists an extraordinary notion among bathmen that a certain quantity of water can never become dirty. The bath, therefore, which is merely a huge tank filled with steam, and a reservoir for water, becomes glutted with abominations, and the water grows as thick as pea-soup. Rats and black-beetles and horrible insects crawl about there ; yet, inexpressibly filthy, foul, and abominable as their baths are, the Persians watch over them with jealous care ; the populace would probably rise in insurrection if a Christian were allowed to bathe there. The bath has almost a sacred character among them. They believe that it even cleanses from the impurity of sin.

In spite of all the precautions taken to exclude strangers, I have bathed in a public bath in Persia. It is a mixture of the Turkish and the Russian bath ; and notwithstanding the mania for such things, which appeared to have seized upon the town when I was last in London, I will venture to say that I did not like it. I had been travelling, and took it possibly at an unfavourable time. The sun had blistered me, the bath fayed me. Every inch of my body was peeled of its skin with a species of currycomb, and I was so sore for many days that I could scarcely bear the contact of my shirt. But I am bound to confess that it has its advantages. In the first place, the bathman is usually a wonderful fellow. The first thing which strikes one is his extraordinary indifference to the changes

of atmosphere. He passes his life walking about in draughts, parboiled, and yet he is healthy and lives to be old. He is a good fellow, too ; merry, cheerful, and witty. He adapts himself with wonderful ease and tact to the humour of his customers. He is like a musical box. You can put any tune you like into him, and he will go on playing till you are tired of listening. He is the only bathman known to me who has really correct ideas about shampooing. He has, of course, a keen eye to his own interest, and is sure to resort to some laughable device for getting more than his due out of his customers. My bathman used gravely to apply to me always for new razors, alleging that my beard was so hard, it required a new blade every time he shaved me ; shaving being a part of his duty.

If I could only have forgotten my skinning (which I could not by any means), I am also bound to confess that I came out from the bath a very different man to the man I was when I went into it. Europeans, after having lived for some time in Persia, become dilapidated, like the Persians themselves ; and there is always something dilapidated about Persians. Men and horses, houses and walls, are never quite sound : there is always a crooked tumble-down look about them. In the human body the effects of the climate and mode of life are peculiarly marked. The hair falls off, the teeth come out long before thirty. The terrible results of fever show themselves in various ways.

Now, it is the purpose and object of the Persian bath to erase all these blots of time and sickness from the person, and it succeeds in a very remarkable manner. To be sure the bald part of my head looks like a lump of gingerbread ; but what hair I have appears not only to have been painted, but varnished too. Having resigned myself passively to the bathman, I find that he has also played wonderful tricks with my eyebrows, and with my nose, and with my ears. My beard looks like that of a youngster of twenty-three. I am astonished at my juvenile appearance, when I survey it in a greasy looking-glass which he offers me for the purpose, and I have some difficulty in repressing a sudden desire to pay my addresses to my friend's granddaughter.

Unfortunately there is no way of rubbing out crow's feet and wrinkles. The skin is the tell-tale. If we rub it off, it grows again, and is as true an index of time as a sun-dial. The nose likewise is as true as the dial's hand. If I could have got a new nose, and a new complexion, and new knees, and new toes without any gout in them, I might have passed for quite a jaunty gentleman—a little too semi-circular about the collar and waistcoat, perhaps, and rather fishy about the eyes ; but still I might have passed muster by twilight, when it is said all cats are grey. My friend's granddaughter might (being very young indeed) have had a sort of sensation at my appearance, as if she beheld a merman, or something she

could not exactly make out. But after all, perhaps, I should only have looked like an old coat turned and well brushed, but with something worn about the seams and button-holes. Alas! too, one's feet get bulbous, and one's hands look like unstarched muslin, and the flesh is no longer elastic. Nevertheless, in the first blush of my triumphant exit from the bath, I would much rather that Reason had kept all these disagreeable truths to herself. Still, when I sum up my sensations calmly, I find I have been a considerable gainer, for although I am well aware that I came out of the bath much dirtier than I went into it—as one does also from a Turkish bath taken in Turkey—and that it has cost me two hours, part of my skin, and a headache, yet I know all the news of the town, and the bath-man has flattered me so adroitly that I go away with a satisfactory idea of my own importance.

The remarkable change I have noticed in my personal appearance, was produced, partly by the action of string and cobbler's-wax on my beard, partly by the famous Persian hair-dye, the receipt for which I obtained, by the kindness of a medical friend, from the Shah's Anderoon, and I will impart it, in the strictest confidence, to any member of the public who may choose to ask me for it; for it is too complicated and abstruse to be printed in a non-scientific journal. Let me return, for the present, to my trusty retainer.

Mehemet Beg is a good man according to his lights. He would not touch a drop of brandy, even when seized one day with cholera, on a wild mountain side, with no help near. Yet he had a peculiar horror of sickness, and took the simple remedy which I substituted out of my medicine-chest with tears of gratitude. His selfishness on ordinary occasions, and the wily ways in which he contrives to gratify it, are very amusing. If I pick out some nice shady place for breakfast before he is hungry himself, he will shake his head gravely, and tell me that it is impossible to stop there. If I persist, he will immediately invent some extraordinary story about robbers, or wild beasts. Nothing will ever persuade him to order the breakfast until he is hungry himself. One day when I was riding a little too fast for him, and had disregarded a gentle hint he had given me to go slower, he dashed suddenly up to my bridle-rein, exclaiming, "Stop!" impressively, and looking wistfully round. We were on the wild frontier lands, and I knew that parties of marauding Kurds were moving about the country, so I halted, at once, unbuckled my holsters, and shading my eyes with my hand, tried to find out from what quarter danger might be expected. Meantime, the Gholauim took out his pipe, lighted it, and deliberately smoked it out. Then asking me for a draught of cold tea, he rode on without further comment.

Meshed Kerrim (the Pilgrim Kerrim) is a very different sort of person. He is my Nozzir, or chief servant. He is a fine man, of grave imposing appearance, and of solemn speech—

nothing would induce him to smile, or to speak three sentences consecutively. The man is a cheat, but a serious respectable sort of cheat—the most provoking and irritating cheat of all. Money entrusted to him for the expenses of the road always disappears in some unaccountable manner. His accounts never balance, and he seems to consider it extraordinary that any one should expect them to balance. Here follows a verbatim report of a conversation respecting ten pounds which I gave to him.

"What! More money again to-day, Kerrim? What have you done with the money you had yesterday?"

Kerrim, bowing abjectly, sideways, and with a face of preternatural solemnity, answers, "I have lent it."

"To whom?"

Kerrim vaguely, as if not understanding the question, "I was in the service of Mr. Smith for fifteen years."

"Well, well; I know that, but that is nothing to do with the ten pounds I gave you yesterday. What have you done with it?"

"I have got it in my bosom."

"Then why do you ask for more?"

"Because there is none left. By Allah and all the prophets, there is none left."

"Then why did you say you had it in your bosom?"

"What should I have said?"

"The truth. If you have not got the money in your bosom or anywhere else, give some account of it?"

"I have served Mr. Smith fifteen years."

This is all the account I ever got of my ten pounds.

There are endless quarrels about precedence, between my servants and those of a gentleman who is travelling with me. They have serious fights among themselves as to who shall enter first after dinner, with pipes.

The Persians are essentially a dirty people, and Persian servants are dirtier than the rest of their countrymen. I am obliged, therefore, to have a Christian cook—for there is no trusting a Persian artist, and Persian servants will not have an Armenian among them. This cook is a Pole. He is the boldest rider I ever saw, and seems quite unconscious of danger, though his horses have not a leg to stand upon. He is always galloping about at a furious pace, and there is quite a job to catch him when one wants to have dinner. When caught, he is a pleasant, good-humoured, tumble-down sort of fellow, whose only idea of cooking is to cram as much meat and vegetables into a tin pot as it will hold, and then let it boil till called for. He serves this mess half raw, or done to rags, as the case may be, in the saucepan in which it was cooked, and calls it "Istu." Upon this dainty fare I had dined for some ten or twelve days, and was rather wishing for a change of diet when I got to Erzeroon. It was with a keen appetite and a very agreeable expectation, therefore, that I prepared to avail myself of an

invitation to dine with the agent of the great Greek commercial house of Kalli, in the capital of Armenia. But great was my surprise and disappointment when we sat down to dinner, and straight before me on a dish I saw my eternal black saucepan, with the "Istu" in it, and my host looking at me curiously to see what I would do with it. Seeing that I did nothing, and that I appeared to entertain a positive enmity towards this dish, or rather this saucepan, my host's kind face wore a very disconcerted look. "I am sorry," said he, "you do not like the dinner, for I have nothing else prepared. Fearing you might not like such simple fare as I could offer you, I consulted your own cook, who told me that you never ate anything but this. Though I thought it an odd taste, I did my best to gratify you."

"May the grave of his grandfather be defiled," said I.

My servants have strange morals.

"Suppose," says one of them in a reasoning tone, as we are halting near a mountain pass : "Suppose any one were to kill me, or I were to kill anybody—I want a horse, fine clothes, a gun. Why should I not have them if I can get the opportunity of taking them from anybody else?"

"To be sure," cried his companions in chorus. "Whose dog is anybody else?"

Marvellous vanity and ingenious lying are the chief characteristics of Persian servants. A servant who disappeared from his party on a journey, created so much anxiety that search was made for him, and he was at length found halting in great comfort at a neighbouring village. One villager was leading his horse to water, a second was washing his feet, a third was brushing his boots, and others were preparing for him a sumptuous meal. He had artlessly declared that he was an emissary of the commander-in-chief. He was a little confused by the sudden appearance of his master, but soon became composed, and readily satisfied the people that his master was a humble friend who had ridden that day forty miles in the rain for the purpose of showing him respect and attention.

I conclude with a little incident which matches the mistake related in Mr. Benjamin Disraeli's *Tancred*, of the Eastern servants who drank up all their master's blacking, supposing it to be wine : One day, when I was travelling, the baggage-mules and most of the servants had gone on, and we saw them in the distance winding in a long train towards a mountain pass. The morning breeze brought the tinkling of their bells faintly towards us. But suddenly Ameem, our chief muleteer, cantered rapidly back. Some devils, he said, had got loose among the baggage, and were endeavouring to destroy it by explosion. Harry told me demurely, however, and with that wonderful command of countenance peculiar to an English servant, "It's some of them there porter-bottles a bustin' again, sir, I dessay. They—the Pussians I means—was all a prayin' round two on 'em as

went off yesterday, and would have it as they was gin.* But I told 'em there worn't no gin there, and that quieted 'em."

GIVING UP.

"He who begins well, ends well," says the adage of I know not what Roman sage, and, great as may be the lesson it inculcates, I fear not to assert, that in the converse of the proposition there is far more teaching and instruction. He who begins well does, doubtless, much; but how little, after all, is his merit in comparison with him who "leaves off." Beginning has a dash of adventure about it. One addresses himself to it as to an enterprise. There is all the excitement of the unknown—in peril, in pleasure, in difficulty, and in contrivance—engaged in it. It is a new land wherein our foot has never ventured, and we feel all the palpitating ardour of a discoverer as we approach it. Beginning, too, has its compensations for non-success in its very essence. We are doing something we have never done before. It is an essay we are making, and no need for discouragement if we be not adepts. We can count upon the cheering counsels of others, too, who have gone the same road before us, and tell us that they, like ourselves, found all the difficulties just as we find them; and, lastly of all, there is an air of youth in a beginning that attracts sympathy and conciliates good will.

What a dreary thing is "leaving off" compared with this! With what an involuntary sigh do the words rise to your lips! I have left off dancing, left off raquet-playing, left off my cigar, my fishing-rod, my summer ramble to Norway—left off that club, that set of men, and so on. Have you not in those few gloomy words been epitomising a biography? Is it not chronicling in one brief phrase the long and weary work of years upon you, and saying, "Non sum qualis eram!" You doubtless try to do the thing heroically, and with the self-graduating chuckle of a fellow who is rather proud of his experiences, as though saying : "No! you'll not catch me at those follies again!" but it won't do. Conscience is wagging a finger at you all this while, and whispering, "Don't try on that humbug with me; make the best of it if you can; but no boasting, no vainglory. I'll not stand that!"

Perhaps, however, you are too wise, or have too much good taste, to fall into this affectation, and that you assume a sort of graceful sadness in the announcement; half hoping a generous disclaimer on the part of your friend, as he says, "You too old! What nonsense, man! Time enough, twenty years hence, to talk in this fashion." Now and then that line will succeed; it will do so when your friend is much older than you, and who can plead his own cause out of your brief, but don't trust it generally. The

* Ghin—demon.

world is not half so courteous as it used to be formerly. The civil people, now-a-days, are satisfied when they are merely silent, and the non-civil ones seem to regard a bitter speech as a tonic, and actually think themselves stronger after they have said an impertinence. If, however, it be a very hard thing to announce to the world that we have left off this, that, or t'other, it is in reality nothing in comparison to the difficulty of the fact itself.

"Ah! I see you have left off your snuff-box," said some one, with the flippancy of him whose nose never knew "rappee," and he never for a moment glances at all the pain and suffering of your sacrifice: the headaches, the fits of absence, the fidgety restlessness that beset you—the want of those little halting-places in your reveries when you took out your box and opened it slowly—the air of calm you could feign in a moment of hot argument by the cunning of your "digation"—the bland courtesy with which you could overcome an angry adversary by the offer of a pinch. He never dreams of all these, nor of the fifty ingenious devices by which you arrived at the victory of your self-denial: how you put salt or pepper into your box—made a present of it to the gardener—or threw it into the canal.

Giving up—no matter what—has a smack of death about it. The object surrendered is left behind, not to be regained, and the dirge of "never more" rings through our hearts as we say farewell.

It is fortunate for us that we take leave of most of our pursuits in life without knowing it. The last day we ever followed the hounds—what a sad day it had been had we felt it to be a last one, as we stood watching the yelping pack in the gorse cover. Could we have given that view-halloo so cheerfully—could we have taken that post and rail so dashing—could we have led through the deep ground laughingly, challenging the young 'uns to follow us—could we have charged that yawning brook at the finish, had we known that it was to be our last leap of all, till we came to that fence before the "unknown hunting-ground?" I am sure and certain that we could not. I am convinced that the most heartless fellow that ever lived could not survive a series of formal leave-takings with the pleasures that filled his daily existence. The most stupendous of all human efforts is abdication. The value of the object surrendered is purely an individual question. One man may give up a throne, another may surrender the delights of turtle. You may say, I've done with a racing-stud, and my sacrifice in giving up cribbage be just as great. The habits which form our resting-places in life's pilgrimage being taken away, we feel like men who journey along a road from which the pleasant benches are removed. Here we were wont to halt and rest our weary limbs—we find no seat to welcome us, we must up and onward! Who knows how weary and how footsore! But yet, with all this, not hopeless; for as we trudge onward we still think of that cool bench under

the willow-tree, and look to the turn of the road to meet it.

There is, however, a consummate philosophy in knowing how to "give up" well; nor is it the gift of every man to do it. We all of us know the importance of leave-taking at the moment when our absence will be felt as a thing to regret, before the period of satiety or weariness has come—before conversation drags, or wit grows laboured. It is true policy to leave the battle of society after a grand charge, and not linger to pick up the wounded or bury the dead. So be it with our pleasures. Let us quit them in the full blaze of their enjoyment, and not steal away ungracefully from the blackened embers.

What a pitiable spectacle is the old fellow shivering on his snow-white hunter, while his servant is dismounting to open the gate or make a gap in the fence! What a graceless exhibition that pursy old fellow with the bald head is making in the waltz, just as dreary in its way as one of the farewell benefits—those "positively last times"—which have come off for five succeeding seasons, and will continue for as many more! As though the whole object were to efface every memory of a once excellence, and all the recollection of a talent that once stirred us to very ecstasy! Why won't Hamlet shake off his "mortal coil," and that Casta Diva give up being a Casta Diva, and the rest of it? Will they not see that it is only given to prime ministers to be as capable at eighty as at eight-and-forty, and that the men who govern their fellows are the only ones that can defy age?

But there are whole classes of men who never know when to leave off. Soldiers and sailors are not of this category, still less are diplomats; but judges are, and bishops, and town physicians, and vergers of cathedrals, and collegiate dons. I am not going to undervalue the difficulty of such a sacrifice: it is no small one. Fancy the judge, for instance, coming back to the world only as a very old lawyer, or my lord the bishop nothing more than an octogenarian vicar—no lawn, no apron, no patronage! Why is there no sliding scale provided by which they could glide gradually down, doing a little less and less, till they sunk into oblivion? The pleasurable pursuits of life are not such drains on the human powers as are the arduous duties of a high employ, and yet one finds how he danced less at five-and-thirty than five-and-twenty; he rode less hard at forty than fifteen years before; and so of skating, and cricket, and rowing, and the like; and why, if so, should a judge of nigh eighty be equal to the work that taxed all his powers when he was fifty? It is not, surely, because mind and memory, and wit and judgment, are less given to wear and tear than bones and ligaments. No, it is simply that these are of the men who won't "leave off!"

There is a strange but very common delusion afloat, that the world needs *us* exactly in the proportion that *we* require the world. This

makes many hold on like barnacles, under the absurd notion that they are useful to the ship—that they preserve the copper! Government officials are very prone to think this; and they sigh to themselves over the thought of a time when some blundering successor will mislay that seal, or not remember where he has laid that document. It is a thought of this kind that poetises life to scores of grey-headed, crêpe-hatted, black frock-coated men, who cross the parks about eleven o'clock of a morning, umbrella in hand, with a half-saddened look compounded of general dreariness and dyspepsia. They are sustained, however, by the consciousness of an obvious destiny. They know their value to "the office!"

It is better on the whole—better for themselves, and better for the world—that these men should not "leave off." They are in their very essence a sort of moral fly-wheel that regulates motion, and gives rhythm to labour; and the world could spare a great many of its brilliant elements with less loss than its "chief clerks."

If it is hard to give up; it is ten times harder to know what to do when one has given up! When a friend once complimented Sir Astley Cooper, in his retirement, on the magnificence of an oak-tree in his lawn, "Yes," said the happy possessor, "I have often thought of hanging myself to one of its branches!" He who gives up with the notion of adopting some new groove in life, must be endowed with remarkable energy and persistence. Painters well understand what is meant by an artist's second manner; and there is a second manner in ethics as well as in art, and with this resemblance—that it is rarely a success. The world, too, identifies a man with what he has done once, if comparatively well, and will not easily tolerate him in a new part. I do not know it as a fact, but I should greatly doubt, for instance, if Sheridan Knowles was ever as popular as a preacher as he was as a playwright.

This new direction to a man's faculties is, in reality, a practical rebuke to his critics, as though saying—"Here is a rich mine in me you never discovered. You praise me for this, and dispraise me for that; but you never suspected that underneath what you approved and condemned was a stratum totally distinct from each." It would be a great step in our knowledge of mankind if we could apply to humanity the tests by which we are guided in the material world, and where the existence of one element is accepted as proof of the presence of another in its immediate neighbourhood. When you find quartz, you'll find gold, is a fact known to every digger; but is there a human quartz? Is there no inert, almost valueless property that is the certain indication of something great, brilliant, and sterling?

What relation has graywhacke to lignite? and yet, where you discover one you are sure of the other; and why do we not attempt similar explorations into human temperament, and be

able to say, "I saw from that man's moroseness he would be an admirable clockmaker;" or, when he laughed, "I observed there is the making of a great ship-builder?"

Could we attain to this, "giving up" would be bereft of more than half its difficulty, and instead of the adventurer on a new career going out upon the wide ocean of life guideless and chartless, he would be steering by a star that never paled, and to a haven whose headlands towered bold and blue in the distance.

ILLIBERAL DOCTORS.

WITH the highest respect and regard for the medical profession, and a wholesome sense of the fact that knowledge comes of study, whereby we are saved from false dependence upon quacks, we yet differ strongly in one respect from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. We hold the practice of medicine and surgery to be the practice of a liberal profession, and that college apparently does not. We hold the medical profession to be a republic of busy, practical, inquiring men, who, when they have given guarantees of a due preparation for the serious responsibility they undertake, in meddling with the lives and health of their fellow-citizens, must be left each man to the teaching of his own experience, and the working out of his own reasoning. There will be, and there must be, even upon vital points of treatment, wide differences of opinion—for example, even at this day, one doctor will bleed a patient to whom another will give half a pint of brandy. There will be wide differences of intellectual power, leading many to weak and erroneous reasoning upon the facts they observe; it may happen, also, in this as in every profession, that the emptiest man will appear most self-sufficient and self-confident. Incompetence elbowing its way roughly forward will sometimes make itself more profitably conspicuous than quick sense and competency. All this is but the way of the world. The incompetent man is usually known of his brethren, and in the sense of that fact has his humiliation, let him impose as he may upon the public.

But if the ignorant practitioner be left to his devices, by what sense of equal rights to free inquiry is even a highly-educated physician to have a ban set on him by his brethren because, in the course of his free exercise of judgment, he has arrived at opinions which are not held by the greater number of his brethren: opinions which he does not dishonestly conceal, and by which, and by the issues and consequences of which in his practice, he honestly agrees to stand or fall? Some time ago the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland ordained as follows: "that no Fellow or Licentiate of the Royal College shall pretend or profess to cure diseases by the deception called Homœopathy, or the practice called Mesmerism, or by any other form of quackery. It is also hereby ordained that no Fellow or Licentiate of

the College shall consult with, meet, advise, direct, or assist any person engaged in such deceptions or practices, or in any system or practice considered derogatory or dishonourable by Physicians or Surgeons." Inasmuch as the persons attacked in this decree are themselves physicians who do not consider their practice derogatory or dishonourable, the meaning of that phrase "by Physicians and Surgeons" must be "by the Council of this or that medical College." Without setting forth in what articles of this most illiberal and indecent denunciation we have faith, and in what we have not faith—wholly apart from that question of opinion—we protest against the unlawful claim of any council whatever to impose its creeds upon the medical profession. For the honour and prosperity of a high intellectual calling, second to none on earth, it is necessary that medical men, whether it favour or oppose their own particular opinions, should resist every attempt to degrade their profession into servitude to the ideas of a majority, or of a minority, or of any body of men whatever. Let them read the following admirable letter in which ARCHBISHOP WHATELY replied to a physician who was himself no homeopathist, and by whom his attention was called to this act of the Irish College of Surgeons :

My dear Sir,—I was well aware of the detestable act of tyranny you refer to. I believe some persons were overawed into taking part in it against their own judgment. I have always protested against such conduct in all departments of life. You may see something to the purpose in my little penny tract on Trades' Unions (to be had at Parker's). In fact, the present is one of the Trades' Unions. A man has a right to refuse to work except for such wages or under such conditions as he himself chooses to prescribe, but he has no right to compel others to concur with him. If there is any mode of medical treatment which he disapproves of, or any system of education which he thinks objectionable, he will be likely to keep clear of it of his own accord, without any need of compulsion or pledges. Those, again, who may think differently ought not to be coerced or bullied. Some persons seem to have a notion that there is some connexion between persecution and religion; but the truth is, it belongs to human nature. In all departments of life you may meet with narrow-minded bigotry and uncharitable party-spirit. Long before the outbreak of the Reformation, the Nominalists and the Realists of the logical school persecuted each other unmercifully; so have Royalists and Republicans done in many countries; and in our own country the Trades' Unions persecute any one who does not submit to their regulations. In Ireland, if any one takes a farm in contravention of the rules of the agrarian conspirators, he is waylaid and murdered; and if he embraces the Protestant faith, his neighbours all conspire to have no dealings with him. The truth is, the majority of mankind have no real love of liberty, except that they are glad to have it themselves, and to keep it all to themselves; but they have neither spirit enough to stand up firmly for their own rights, nor sufficient sense of justice to respect the rights of others. They will submit to the domineering of a majority of their own party, and will join with them in domineering over others. In the midst of

the disgust and shame which one must feel at such proceedings as you have alluded to, it is some consolation to the advocates of the systems denounced to see that there is something of a testimony borne to them by their adversaries, who *dare not* trust the cause to the decision of reason and experience, but resort to such expedients as might as easily be employed for a bad cause as a good one.

R. DUBLIN.

There is no simpler or more ancient source of trouble and wrong than the formula,—Thus I think, I know I am right, and it is therefore for the benefit of the world that my opinion should be imposed on others.

Let us urge, then, upon all medical men, not in the interests of this or that body of exceptional thinkers, but in the interests of their own noble and liberal profession, to hold in utter scorn this wretched old delusion of the argument by pains and penalties; to make it clear to the world that within their bounds at least there is liberty of thought, there are men left free to grope for truth as their own instincts lead them in very various directions. Any medical man, as Dr. Whately points out, is personally free to choose as he will the men in concert with whom he feels that he can act most usefully, and may refuse to meet a homeopathist in consultation. In so doing he goes his own way; but he has no right to impose that way with pains and penalties, direct or indirect, upon his brethren.

It is not for the true scholar in medicine to adopt the tone of Foote's apothecary, who, when Sir Jacob Jollup observes, "We are a little better instructed, Master Lint. Formerly, indeed, a fit of illness was very expensive; but now physic is cheaper than food," cries, "Marry, Heaven forbid!". "Why," says Sir Jacob, "a fever that would formerly have cost you a fortune, you may now cure for twelvepennorth of powder." "Or kill, Sir Jacob," cries the apothecary. "I am sorry to find a man of your worship's—Sir Jacob, a promoter of puffs, an encourager of quacks, Sir Jacob." "Regulars, Lint, regulars; look at their names—not a soul of them but is either P.L. or M.D." On which Lint's comment is of the "derogatory and dishonourable" school—"Plaguy liars! Murderous dogs!" Truth and right never come to their own so quickly and so surely as when they leave error to run an honest race with them and prove her weakness. Nothing is got, let them be ten times truth and right that falsely and wrongfully hope to thrive the quicker for assassination, by attempts to strangle at the starting-post or on the course, even the meanest of competitors. Let not another Dr. Garth have to sing of his Faculty "how ancient leagues to modern discord fell," and cry again to the goddess of health,

With just resentments and contempt you see
The foul dissensions of the Faculty;
How your sad, sick'ning art now hangs her head,
And once a science is become a trade.

For surely nothing higher than a dull, short-sighted spirit of trade could prompt an ordinance

like that of the Irish College, against which the Archbishop of Dublin reasons with so generous and irresistible a force.

THE HUNGARIAN OFFICER.

In the year 183—(I abstain purposely from giving the exact date), I—then a very young man—had an appointment connected with our embassy at Vienna. The appointment was a good one for such a mere youngster, and it gave me a position in the society there which I honestly believe has been in more ways than one of service to me since. What a life it was that we led in that most brilliant of capitals! That an embassy should be the scene of all sorts of gaiety is essential almost to its existence, and certainly to its popularity. My situation gave me the entrée to all the Foreign embassies, so that if balls, and concerts, and entertainments could make a young fellow happy, I ought to have been more happy than most people. It certainly was a pleasant time, and as I look back to it now, I feel like one with heavy clouds above him, gazing away to where, in the distance, the landscape is lit up by a partial gleam of sunlight.

Every one knows that Vienna is one of the grandest booths in Vanity Fair. As one looked around those assemblies, the splendour of all that met the eye could indeed hardly be surpassed. The toilettes of the ladies were all a-blaze with jewellery and colour; and, as to the men, Austria being a country of uniforms, of orders, and decorations, a plain, private coat was scarcely ever to be seen. Besides all this, the people who wore these magnificent garments were mostly men and women of good birth and race: many of them gifted with high qualifications, both personal and intellectual, acquired during lives spent in one of the most polished courts in Europe.

You would say that in such a circle as this, where both men and women were accustomed to everything that was perfect, and where the standard was naturally a very high one, it was difficult, or almost impossible, for any man to make what is called a "great sensation." And so indeed it was. Yet I cannot disguise from myself the fact that in my memory, as I think of all that goodly company, there stands out one individual so far beyond all the others in everything that goes to make a man distinguished, that the rest seemed almost like clowns beside him.

This man was a certain Colonel Bergfeldt. He was a Hungarian, I believe; but I know that he was reported to be a man of good birth, of considerable wealth, and that beyond this little seemed to be known of him. He appeared somewhat suddenly in Viennese society; but, once there, he very soon became the rage. Young as I then was, I remember being prodigiously struck with him, and perhaps all the more so because of the disparity of age between us. As to his age, who could tell it? There

are some men with light hair and complexion who are very puzzling in that matter of guessing their age.

This colonel was a tall man, with a hard, thin, perfect figure. Plenty of chest and shoulder, with long fine limbs. It was the figure of the kind of man who, where fatigue and endurance are concerned, is sure to knock everybody up; the kind of figure, of all others, the least seldom met with in connexion with ill health, or even sudden temporary disease. There was not flesh enough for inflammatory disorders, there was too much wire for those that spring from debility. It was long, however, before one noticed these particulars, the attention of any stranger being naturally given to some sort of attempt to fathom the man's countenance, and see what there was there of promise or of warning.

It would be next to impossible to say certainly that there was either. It was a face of stone. Pale, but not unhealthily so. A strange paleness, with a curious earthy quality about it that was a defect—almost the only defect—by daylight, but which did not appear by candle-light at all. Face, hair, and moustache were all different shades of the same colour, or absence of colour. This was what made this Hungarian specially remarkable, though the regularity of his features, and the want of change about them, would any way have distinguished him too from other men. Ability, coolness, nerve, and will, were all marked legibly in his countenance; as to anything else, certainly at that time—whatever I may be now—I was not physiognomist enough to be able to go deeper.

The accomplishments of the man were wonderful. Was there anything he could not do, and do well? He seemed to know everything. As to languages, I myself have heard him talk, apparently with equal fluency, in French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish, in one evening. Then if we went out shooting with him, his accuracy of aim made us all feel ashamed of ourselves. At billiards we had no chance with him. His horses were the wildest and most spirited in Vienna, but they were tame and manageable in his hands, as if they knew it was no use to resist. His success in everything he attempted was the same, down even to waltzing and lansquenet.

Was it any wonder that a man, gifted with such advantages, should soon become a favourite in the society in which he appeared? He was the rage. No ball, no shooting party, no banquet or fête champêtre was thought of without him. He was the life and soul of the society of Vienna.

It may be imagined what was the effect upon us all when this man suddenly, and without warning, disappeared from among us. The sensation made by his presence—great as it was—was nothing to that caused by his absence. His disappearance, I remember, was first remarked on the occasion of a grand ball at the French embassy, at which he was to have been present; and great was the consternation among those ladies who had been keeping themselves without

engagements throughout the evening, as hour after hour passed away and the colonel did not appear. From that time he was seen no more among us. His engagements for a month of festivities of different sorts were all broken through; and this, though one of the colonel's most remarkable characteristics, was an almost scrupulous punctuality. It was the strangest thing. He was gone. This same punctuality, of which I have spoken, had, however, appeared in all his pecuniary dealings. He left no debt behind him. Everything was paid up by his confidential servant, who left the town a few hours after his master.

The thing was a nine days' wonder, and every soul among us was for that time occupied with incessant speculation as to what could possibly have become of this man, who had won the admiration of all the men, and turned the heads of half the women in Vienna. With me, I must own that the sensation made by the colonel's disappearance outlived even the legitimate nine days. I was just at that age when a young fellow with a keen eye for all that is attractive in the world is most struck by such versatility of achievement, and such uniform capacity as I had seen manifested in this Hungarian colonel. I could not forget him, and many were the efforts that I made on my own responsibility to solve this mystery with which his departure was surrounded.

Among my acquaintances made at Vienna was one whom I think I am justified in calling by the warmer title of friend. This was a certain Madame Stortzer, a lady who at that time occupied a high and influential position in our society, her husband being a member of the State Council, and quite one of the great men of Vienna. I had, on first coming out, brought introductions to Madame Stortzer from an old and valued friend of hers; and partly owing to this circumstance, and partly, perhaps, because my freshness of enjoyment and good spirits amused her, she had taken me socially altogether under her wing. In fact, we were great friends, and few days passed without my spending an hour or two in her boudoir, gossiping pleasantly enough about all the news of the world we lived in.

Of course at the time I am speaking of it was only natural that our talk should often turn to the subject with which I have said that I, in company with every one else, was so much occupied—the Hungarian colonel and his extraordinary disappearance. Now it so happened that whenever our conversation did take this turn, I could not help observing that a curious expression came over the lady's face. It was quite involuntary, and indeed very slight and little noticeable; but still I did remark it, and that so invariably that I became at last impressed with the idea that some particulars in connexion with this matter were known to Madame Stortzer, of which the rest of the world was ignorant.

One day I was sitting talking to her as usual, and, as was also usual, I was for the hundredth

time expressing my surprise that this secret of the reason and manner of the colonel's disappearance had baffled all our friends, and that the thing still remained a dead secret to all of us. As I spoke, I looked fixedly at Madame Stortzer's face, and there, sure enough, was the old expression. It was the expression of one bursting with information, full of a secret, able to reveal it, but deterred from doing so. I spoke suddenly, and on the impulse of the moment:

"Dear Madame Stortzer, I am persuaded that you know more about this affair than you say."

"What do you mean?" she replied, trying to look displeased.

"I mean," said I, "that your kindness to me has emboldened me so much that I allow my thoughts to find expression in words. You know what has become of Colonel Bergfeldt."

She paused, and appeared a good deal confused. After a moment's indecision she turned suddenly and looked me in the face. Satisfied with her scrutiny, she spoke at last, quickly and earnestly:

"Can you keep a secret for" (so many) "years?" mentioning the number of years, which it is needless to say have now elapsed. "I believe you can," she continued, without waiting for my answer. "I do know what has become of Colonel Bergfeldt."

"I knew it," I said, almost unconsciously.

"Hush!" she continued, "not a word. Sit still there on that fauteuil by the stove, and listen. What I know you shall know."

I took my place as she had directed me, and she went on:

"My husband, as you know, is a member of the Council, and it is from him that I have learnt what I am going to tell you. Judge if secrecy is necessary on your part." I bowed, and she continued:

"Know, then, that some years ago an old friend of mine, the Count Vordenberg, took to himself a young wife, and carried her off to his château near the old town of Reigersfeldt. How surprised all his friends were! The count was a middle-aged man, and, though not advanced in years, was what is familiarly called an 'old bachelor.' He was a man, too, of excessively quiet and studious habits, who liked to live shut up with his books, and who, besides, was engaged in all sorts of scientific experiments. In short, he seemed the last man to marry a young lady such as he had chosen, who, besides being very pretty, was extremely animated and fond of gaiety and change, almost to a fault.

"Well, the marriage took place, and the Count and Countess Vordenberg went off to their château to try the great experiment of life; an experiment which threw into the shade all those in which the count had formerly spent so much of his time. I will do the countess the justice to say that I believe her to have been sincerely attached to her husband, and that I also believe her to have been a highly principled, and a good girl. Her worst faults were a love of admiration and a frantic appreciation of pleasure. Dangerous qualities enough you will

say. It was almost more wonderful that she should have fallen in love with the count than that he should have fallen in love with her; but she was full of fancies, and I suspect that at the particular time when the count made his offer she had a fancy that she ought to be allied to a man older than herself, whom she could look up to, and so on. At all events, she loved her husband, and went away to the old château, full of happy anticipations.

"Alas, poor child, she had either miscalculated her forces, or had not made any calculations at all, in her whole life. At first it was all very well. There was the old castle to examine, and all its queer ins and outs to explore. There was novelty over all, and it was a pleasure to sport about her sober, middle-aged husband, and lighten him up with her almost childish frolics. Sometimes, it is true, even at first, it would happen that misgivings would come into her mind as she thought over the future—misgivings as to how she was to fill up the time between that present hour and the distant period when age should have begun to tame her down and make that quiet, which she now hated, palatable and even delightful to her. Still, such thoughts as these held but unfrequent sway, and troubled her but little—at first.

"Time passed—time, that tries our strength so relentlessly—time, the only test—time, that shows the metal we are made of, whether it is gold, or iron, or paltry foil, or tinsel lacquer, or dross. Time passed, and Countess Vordenberg began to mope, and to complain that her very heart was weary. Heaven knows," continued Madame Stortz, as she glanced up at the memorandums of her many engagements in their place over the stove, "Heaven knows, I do not blame her. Of course she ought to have remembered that she had committed herself to this life for better or worse, that she had married her husband because she loved him, that she had had a miserable home before, which was indeed the case, from which she wished at any price to get away, and that now it behoved her to make the very best of the life on which she had entered. No doubt this would have been only right, but still, living such a different existence as I do, I dare not blame her for not being more resigned and contented in the old castle at Reigersfeldt.

"And her husband. It is a question how far he was to blame in not trying to accommodate himself and his habits to the requirements of his wife's nature. When two people enter on marriage they each sign a contract which demands of each some amount of concession to the other's peculiar requirements. No doubt, if the count had chosen, he might very much more have mitigated the dulness of which his wife complained. There was society to be had in the neighbourhood if he had cultivated it, instead of rejecting the overtures of well-meaning people whose visits bothered him, and interrupted him in the pursuit of his studies. There were amusements, too, in the town, on the very outskirts of which the castle stood. There were balls. There was an opera,

and a playhouse. But the count was lazy, and hated the trouble of going out. Sometimes, indeed—for the count loved, with an affection that had something of the parental in it, 'the disturber of his peace,' as he called his wife—sometimes he would, for a day or two, take compassion on her dulness, and make the great effort of going out to dine with some of their nearest neighbours, a family, the head of which, a certain General Bremner, was one of his oldest friends. But it was very rarely—only two or three times in a year—that he could be persuaded to make even this concession to ordinary sociability.

"It was on the occasion of one of these visits to the general's that the count happened to be seated next an officer in the army who had just arrived to take temporary command of the dépôt quartered in the town of Reigersfeldt. He was a young and singularly handsome man, with a peculiar force and authority expressed in his demeanour, which his youth rendered the more remarkable. That youth of his was, however, enough for the count, who had a general idea that all young men were fools; so he simply devoted himself to his neighbour on the other side, who was a learned doctor of the town, and ready to talk of chemistry and science generally, to any extent the count liked, introducing long words enough to interfere with his very digestion.

"It happened that in the course of that dinner the conversation got upon some excavations which had been made in a distant part of the country, and which had led to some rather remarkable discoveries of an archaeological nature. The young officer seated next to the count had been present when these discoveries were made, and now launched out into some account of all that he had seen and heard in connexion with the subject. Nothing could exceed the count's surprise, unless it was his delight, as he listened to these particulars, and as he discovered that the young man, of whom he had conceived so slightly, was not only well informed on this particular matter, but was thoroughly acquainted with other antiquarian subjects. The learned doctor, the count's other neighbour, was deserted altogether, and during the remaining time that the company was at table, the count and his new friend were continually engaged in conversation, which to the older man, whatever it might have been to the younger, was of the most surpassing interest. Naturally enough, in the course of it, an invitation was given to the young officer to ride over, when occasion served, and inspect the different curiosities which the count had got together in his own private cabinet. That invitation was accepted.

"Lieutenant Bergfeldt"—I started at that name, though I had guessed what was coming—"Lieutenant Bergfeldt had more ways than one of rendering himself welcome at the castle. Besides being able to talk to the count upon scientific matters, he was always at the service of the countess, and was always prepared to be her escort whenever a protector was necessary to her.

The countess, a timid rider, was now able to make long excursions on horseback, having for her companion one of the most accomplished horsemen that ever put foot in stirrup. Did she desire, again, to go to some ball in the neighbourhood, to some concert or opera in the town? there was the lieutenant ever ready to give her his arm, to see her to the carriage, to do all, in short, that her husband ought to have done. "Cruel and selfish neglect," Madame Stortzer broke off—"wicked carelessness on the part of that husband who so left to stand alone the frail fabric of a woman's weakness. Not," she continued, rapidly—"not that they erred: the Countess Constantia was a true wife."

"It was part of the same selfishness of the count's which made him so careless of what his wife did, so long as she did not interrupt him in his favourite pursuits—that neither would he sacrifice any of his habits, not even half an hour of his night's rest, to her constitutional love of pleasure and change. If he did not get to bed early and have his due amount of sleep, he would not be fit for the labours of the next day. So the countess must be in every night by eleven o'clock. What she did till that hour was a matter of indifference to her husband; she might go where she liked and do what she liked before that hour; but by eleven she must be inside the castle gates. On one or two occasions there had been some slight infringement of this regulation, and the result had been that the count was so seriously displeased as actually to go the length of saying that from that time the porter at the gate would receive strict orders to close the doors at eleven o'clock, and not to open them after that hour to any living soul.

"Things were at this point, when one day the intelligence was brought to the castle by the Lieutenant Bergfeldt that a new company of actors of unusual ability had arrived in the town, and were to perform an adaptation of one of those French dramas of extreme interest which at the time I am speaking of were appearing continually at the Paris theatres. The lieutenant had seen the play in Paris, and gave so promising an account of it that the countess was wild to see it, and that very evening it was arranged that Lieutenant Bergfeldt should come to the castle and accompany her at the proper hour to the theatre. I think I have mentioned that the castle was just outside the town—"

Madame Stortzer paused for a moment, as if almost unwilling to go on, and described what followed with something of a hesitating reluctance.

"The play almost exceeded in interest even what the countess had expected, and when in the middle of an act, and at one of the most exciting moments of the story, the lieutenant suddenly leant over to her and said that he had some inspection to make, some military duty to do—I know not what—which obliged him to be absent from the theatre for a short time, perhaps half an hour at most—when this occurred, she was so absorbed in watching what was going on upon

the stage that she hardly heard what he said, and merely bowing her acquiescence, turned again eagerly to the scene, reluctant to lose a word. When Bergfeldt returned, after about half an hour's absence, the play was near its termination, and the interest was so completely at its highest that the countess merely turned for a moment when the lieutenant entered the box and put up her finger to engage him to silence.

"There was a pause in the acting for a few minutes, and the countess turned to her companion to ask the time. 'How pale you look,' she said; 'are you suffering?'

"'No,' he replied. 'I was afraid of being late, and I have been running.'

"'What time is it?' asked the countess again.

"'It is ten minutes to eleven.'

"'I must go,' she said; 'how dreadful to lose the rest.'

"'In another quarter of an hour the play will be over, or at least the main interest of it,' said the lieutenant.

"'Yes, but by that time the gates will be closed.'

"'You don't mean to say that you imagine for one moment that the count—that your husband—that such an order as that will really be carried out?' urged Lieutenant Bergfeldt.

"'I am sure of it,' she answered.

"'And I am equally certain the other way. Why, it is ridiculous. Take my advice and try the experiment. You cannot always adhere to this arrangement of being in at a certain hour, like a school-girl.'

"'The count's arrangements are all good ones, and such as he has a perfect right to make,' replied the countess, who never would hear a disparaging word said of her husband.

"At that moment the intermediate scene came to an end, and the interesting part of the story was resumed. The crisis was evidently close at hand. The countess lingered in her place.

"When she rose to go it was ten minutes past eleven.

"The countess looked at her companion. She was as pale as he now, but infinitely less composed. In ten minutes more they were at the castle gate. It was closed.

"The countess trembled violently as she said:

"'What have I done? I knew that this would be so.'

"'Nonsense,' said the lieutenant, who himself was somewhat discomposed; 'it is only a joke. The thing will never be persisted in. Ring the bell, Lorenz,' he continued to the coachman, who had descended from his place.

"The man did as he was told, but no notice was taken of the appeal. He rang again and again, and at last a window was opened in the turret which flanked the gate, and the porter put out his head.

"'Why don't you open the gate?' said the lieutenant, in an angry tone. He had alighted from the carriage, and was now standing beside the coachman. 'What do you mean,' he con-

tinued, 'by keeping your mistress waiting here at this time of night?'

"My orders are not to open the gate," replied the man.

"Do you know who this lady is?"

"I know perfectly," the porter answered. "But what can I do?"

"Do! why open the gate instantly," cried the lieutenant.

"I dare not do it," the man replied.

"Hans Tramer," said the countess, speaking for the first time, "it is I who ask you to let me in." I must mention," continued Madame Stortzer, "that the countess was a favourite with all her dependents, having won upon them by her gentle and gracious ways. 'Hans,' she went on, 'I will be responsible for the consequences. You shall not lose your place.' The man hesitated.

"Hans," said the Countess Constantia, "when your wife was at the worst of the fever which is still upon her, I did not hesitate to come and see her at the risk of my life."

The man's head disappeared at the turret window, and soon the sound of unfastening bolts and bars was heard behind the great doors.

The lieutenant took his leave at the door, as his custom was, and the countess bade him good night, and went into the house. Cautiously and on tiptoe she approached the room in which her husband was lying, for she hoped that he might still be asleep in spite of the noise which had been made at the gate, and she was very willing to defer all explanation till the morrow. There was no sound in the room, and the lady approached the bed congratulating herself that the count was still asleep. As she drew nearer, something strange about her husband's position struck her, and looking at him more closely she observed that his eyes were partly open.

In another moment the castle was ringing with the countess's shrieks, and the whole household rushed to the apartment in which the count lay—dead."

Madame Stortzer paused for a moment, but I did not interrupt her, although I was breathless to hear the rest. Presently she went on:

"It was at first thought that the count had died a natural death, but on examination of the body it was found that there were evident signs of suffocation. There were marks on the throat, and evidence of heavy pressure on the chest, which left little doubt that violence had been used, though every effort had been made to conceal the signs of it. Of course a most searching inquiry took place, with a view to the discovery of the murderer, but it was wholly unavailing. The count had retired to bed at an unusually early hour, and none of the servants had heard any noise in the house, or seen any strange person about the premises. Hans Tramer, the porter, was of course more specially examined, in order that it might be ascertained whether any one had, in the course of the evening, passed through the gate, and it then came out that for some time the porter had left the lodge in charge

of his little boy, while he went in to look after his wife, who was still suffering from the remains of a severe attack of fever. The man was devotedly attached to his wife, and had in this respect unquestionably neglected his duty. As to the boy's evidence, little could be made of that. He said, indeed, that he had seen a man muffled up in a cloak pass into the castle, but that he took no notice of this, as he felt sure at the time that it was Lieutenant Bergfeldt, to whom he knew that the entrée of the castle was accorded at all hours. The child stuck to this statement, even in the teeth of the lieutenant's own contradiction of the story; but as by his own account he had been asleep part of the time when he ought to have been watching the gate, no importance was attached to his evidence. The lieutenant's word, of course, went for more than that of the porter's little son. I must mention, by-the-by, that no one was more energetic than Lieutenant Bergfeldt in trying to find out the real criminal, but neither his efforts nor any one else's were in this respect successful.

"I will not dwell," Madame Stortzer continued, "on the grief and self-reproach of the countess. Her attachment to her husband had been sincere, and the thought that she had been disobeying his injunctions at the very moment of his death, was almost worse to bear than even the death itself, with all its attendant horrors. For some time she refused to see any one, and remained altogether shut up in her rooms, not even going out for air and exercise. Lieutenant Bergfeldt, indeed, she was obliged to communicate with from time to time, as he it was who was foremost in pursuing all those investigations which were necessitated by the peculiar circumstances of the count's death. Old General Bremmer, too, it was necessary that she should see occasionally, as he had been appointed by the late count to administer his affairs. The countess was left well off, everything, with the exception of a few trifling legacies, being bequeathed to her by the will of her late husband.

"I have said that the widow was brought, from time to time, in contact with Lieutenant Bergfeldt. It was impossible to imagine anything more perfect than the mixture of respect and sympathy with which this young officer approached the bereaved lady. For some time no allusion was made between them to her affliction, and their intercourse was confined almost entirely to matters of business, but after a while, and in a manner insensibly, the lieutenant would allow himself to say some sympathetic word, to make some mention of his respect for the deceased count, to allude to the intimacy which had existed between them. By degrees, too, and after a long interval, he would allow, as if accidentally, some expression to escape him indicative of the intense feeling of commiseration with which he was penetrated as he looked on and saw what were the sufferings of the young widow—feeling all the time so helpless to relieve those sufferings in any way whatever. But why

do I speak thus?" said Madame Stortzer, interrupting herself impatiently. "The man laid out his plan like an artist, and day by day, hour by hour almost, the consolation of his presence became more and more necessary to the countess.

"Consolation is a dangerous thing, when the consoler is a man possessed of such qualities as this Lieutenant Bergfeldt, and when the consoled is a young and pretty woman, with large means at her disposal. Before the year was out, it became evident to those who stood by and watched, that the poor old count would soon have a successor, and ere the second year was half through, Lieutenant Bergfeldt was established in the old castle, lord of its mistress, and of all the place contained.

"I am near the termination of *my* part of the story," my friend went on. "His object gained, this unhappy woman in his power, and all her possessions within his grasp, it became unnecessary for him to play his amiable part longer, and very soon this ill-starred lady found to her dismay that she had sacrificed herself to a man whose dark will was unfettered by any restraints such as the heart and the conscience exercise over less cold-blooded mortals. Periods of ill-use and neglect at home, were followed by seasons when the poor woman was altogether deserted by her cruel and unscrupulous master. Sometimes even she would hear nothing of him for months together, and, indeed, there is little reason to doubt that the less she heard of his proceedings at such times the better.

"It was during one of these absences from the castle, no doubt, that Colonel Bergfeldt as he is now called, made his recent sojourn in Vienna. You yourself were the witness of his success in one society, and you, like every one else, were astonished at his sudden withdrawal from it. When I have accounted to you for that withdrawal, all that I have got to tell in connexion with this strange and terrible affair will be at an end.

"It is only a few days since that the people about the palace here were a good deal astonished by the arrival at the gates of a certain old priest, who came up from a distant part of the country, and desired to have an audience of the emperor, alleging that he had a communication to make of the very greatest possible importance, and which he could, or would, only make to the emperor himself. It is one of the curious apparent inconsistencies of our despotic governments, that the sovereign is more accessible than with you in England; so it was no great wonder that that petition of the old priest's was granted, and he was admitted to an audience with the emperor. The old man said that he had felt for some time that his own end was near, and that he had travelled, in spite of his many infirmities, a long distance, in order that he might reveal to the Father of the People certain secrets, which, as they concerned others, he felt ought not to die with him. And then he spoke at once of this

man, the Colonel Bergfeldt. The marriage ceremony, which the priest himself had performed between the countess and Bergfeldt, had been a vain and empty ceremony, the latter having, at the moment when it was celebrated, a wife still living—an unprincipled woman, who consented to keep the thing secret in consideration of a certain annual sum paid to her by the colonel. These circumstances had come to the knowledge of the priest under the seal of the confessional, for it was one of the fantastic elements in Bergfeldt's character, that he still held to the performance of some of the rites of religion, or, as it should be called in this case, perhaps, of superstition.

"Under the same seal of secrecy, too," continued Madame Stortzer, "there came to the priest's knowledge the true story of the death of the old count. You have no doubt guessed already who was the perpetrator of that cruel murder. When I told you of that temporary absence of the colonel's from the theatre on the night when that crime was committed, you guessed, I have no doubt, that it was no military, or indeed any other, duty that took him away, but that his object in absenting himself was to get that opportunity of taking the life of the man who had admitted him to his house, and given him his confidence and his friendship. You guessed rightly. On that dreadful night this wicked and merciless man, who had long entertained the desire to possess himself of his friend's wife, and of his money too—on that night, when he left the theatre, he managed—that lucky accident of the porter's absence from his post favouring him—to pass the gate unobserved by everybody but the child, whose evidence was not taken in contradiction to the colonel's own statement. It was he who committed that crime which he was afterwards so busy in trying to trace. It was he who profited by it, and became possessed of the goods and the wife of the friend whom he had treacherously slain."

"And was this the man," I asked, for I could hardly believe it, "with whom we have all been associating on terms of intimacy?"

"The same," replied my friend. "I have little doubt—for I forgot to mention just now that his first wife is lately dead—I have little doubt that he came now to Vienna with the intention of making some other unhappy girl his victim. He would calculate, and with justice, that a woman of the countess's weak and yielding nature would easily be kept silent, or, as his marriage with her was illegal at the time when it was made, perhaps he thought, being tired of her, that he might now get rid of her altogether. Of these things, however, I know nothing; they may have been in his mind, or they may not. At all events, his career is cut short."

"And how was his arrest managed?" I asked.

"Oh," replied Madame Stortzer, "I saw it with my own eyes. You were not at the ball at Madame de Merville's, I remember, or you would have seen the arrest yourself, though of course

you would not have understood it any more than I did. The colonel was waltzing—you remember how wonderfully he used to dance—he was waltzing with that lovely Baroness Brenn, and many of us, I amongst the rest, were looking on at them and the other dancers. After a certain time they paused near to where I was standing, to get breath and rest a little. An officer in an Austrian uniform, who had also been one of the spectators, came quietly round to the colonel's side, and said a few words which I could not hear. I managed, however, to catch the colonel's reply, "I suppose there is time for another turn?" His answer was, I suppose, in the negative, for shortly after I heard the colonel say to his partner, "A friend has arrived at my house on urgent business. It is necessary that I should see him immediately, but I shall be back in a short time, and we will finish this valse after supper." He handed the baroness to a seat, and left the room in company with the Austrian officer."

"And that was the arrest of a murderer?"

"It was."

"And this is all you know?" I asked.

"All I know now," answered Madame Stortzer. "But come and see me again to-morrow at this time, and I shall doubtless have more to tell you. But remember," she continued, gravely, "remember your promise."

I pledged myself once more, and left her.

The next day I was punctual to the appointment.

"Well," I said, as I sat down in my old place by the stove, "have you any more to tell me?"

"Yes," answered Madame Stortzer, "I have indeed. The drama is near its termination, and the curtain will soon rise upon the last act."

"He is to die, then?" I asked.

"The Council was assembled," Madame Stortzer replied, "by the emperor directly after his first interview with the old priest. The colonel has been condemned, and is to die in a few days. But it was more of the countess that I wished to speak to you just now. She has arrived in Vienna."

"Arrived in Vienna?"

"I know not how," continued Madame Stortzer, "the tidings reached her of her husband's arrest, of his being charged both with the murder of the old count, and of the invalidity of the marriage between the colonel and herself. These tidings have reached her at any rate, and now that wondrous love which only mothers know, has strengthened her even in this moment of her agony, and she has come up here to petition that a new marriage may take place between her and the colonel before he dies, in order that the two children which have been born to them may not be deprived of the advantages of legitimacy."

"And do you mean to say," I asked, "that such a marriage is to take place?"

"It is to take place," answered Madame Stortzer, "within the very walls of the prison, the night before the execution takes place. The wife and the husband are to meet before the

altar. They are not to see each other either before or after the ceremony, nor is one word—except the words of the marriage service—to be exchanged between them."

"Her strength will break down under such an ordeal," I said.

Madame Stortzer did not answer at first. "I have seen her," she said presently, "and rendered her what services I could. She is now almost in a state of unconsciousness of what happens around her. Her grief seems to have stunned her. In such a condition she may get through this last terrible trial, but it is a chance. No one could pronounce on it with certainty. I think," Madame Stortzer went on, "that she hardly knew me, though we were school-girls together, and intimate friends before her marriage with Count Vordenberg."

I was very young when the events I am describing took place. I was at that age when, if in Paris, I must always go to the Morgue. I had not had suffering enough to make scenes of misery and horror intolerable to me. A strange desire took possession of me now to be a witness of that last scene which was to end this strange eventful history. Now I should shrink from such a thing, do anything, go anywhere to avoid it.

I mentioned what was in my head to Madame Stortzer.

"Do you really wish it?" she said. "Why unnecessarily be present at a scene of such unutterable misery and terror?"

My friend argued long and earnestly against my desire, but it was not to be shaken. A strange infatuation it was. I seemed unable to resist it. I dreaded the thing unspeakably, yet felt that it must be done.

At last Madame Stortzer's arguments gave way before my obstinacy. It was not difficult for her to obtain for me what I wanted. Her husband was an excellent man, and may have been, very likely, a wise senator as well; but one quality he certainly did not possess, and that was the power of resisting his wife's will. It was soon arranged that I was to be smuggled into the fortress, and was to be a concealed spectator of all that took place on the night of the wedding. From the moment that this was arranged, I think I would have given anything to have receded from what I had committed myself to so eagerly.

I shall never forget that night, or the scene of which I was the witness. The little chapel of the prison was so situated that it was approached by various passages or corridors communicating with different parts of the main building. Each of these corridors had a separate entrance in the chapel, and it was so arranged, no doubt in order that different classes of prisoners might enter the consecrated building without being necessarily brought in contact with each other. I was placed in a dark corner, close to the altar, from which post I could see everything that passed without being myself observable. The chapel was dimly lighted by the candles on the altar, and

by the faint glimmer of the small hanging lamp which burnt before it, and which was never allowed to go out. On the steps of the rude altar stood the priest, attended by a single chorister, waiting till the moment should come when his office was to be performed. One or two jailers and attendants were about the chapel, but one only knew they were there by hearing the echo of their faint whisperings, the great shadows thrown by the pillars and by the massive stonework of the building rendering it impossible to see them.

In that dead silence the faintest and most distant sounds were distinctly audible, and it was not long before I heard the grating of bolts and the shutting of a heavy door in a remote part of the building. By-and-by there were more such sounds, and then I heard the trampling of feet, apparently very near to me but behind the wall. In another moment a door opened close to where I stood, and there entered, first some of the superior officers of the prison, and then walking between two turnkeys, and heavily manacled, there appeared the man whom I, as a boy, had admired so much—the man who had seemed to me to unite all the qualities which could make life enviable—the man whom I had last seen caressed and made much of in the gayest saloons in one of the most brilliant capitals of the world.

Just Heaven! what a man this was. Had that inconceivable heroism and strength which belonged to him been employed in some good cause, how glorious his career might have been, and his life how useful to his fellow-men! He was almost unchanged. He was, as I have said before, always very pale, he may have been a shade paler, and the lines of his face may have been dug a little, a very little, deeper. Otherwise he was unaltered, and but for the difference in his dress, he was still the same man who had carried all before him in the drawing-rooms of Vienna. If I could have been seen in my dark corner, I am pretty sure that it would have appeared that I was infinitely more moved by his position than he was himself.

For one moment he flinched, and did seem to feel some part of the horror of the situation. It was when, after he had stood there before the altar for some short time, with the faint light of the hanging lamp upon his terrible face, a sort of strange rumour filled the chapel that some one else was approaching, and presently, by a door opening into the chapel, exactly on the opposite side of the building to that by which he had entered it, his wife, closely veiled, and attended by two ladies, whose features were also concealed, but one of whom I thought was Madame Stortzer, was supported into the chapel.

It seems almost wrong to speak of agony so

terrible as this of which I was a witness. Directly she reached the altar, the countess lifted her veil, and it was then that that momentary change of which I have spoken did come over the stony features of the man beside her. As to the countess herself, she absolutely seemed lost, there was hardly recognition in the gaze which she fixed on her husband, as I will call him in anticipation, and which never, I believe, throughout the ceremony, which commenced immediately, was removed for a moment from his face. It is my hope that she was in some sort, by long suffering and the horror of the situation, reduced to a state of half-stupefaction. I do not know that during the celebration of the marriage she spoke. She may have done so, the priest must have known, but I heard no sound of her voice, nor saw a movement of her ashy lips. Her eyes were fixed with a scared sidelong glance on her husband, and I believe she took no more part in what went on than we take in our dreams. But when all was over, and the man stooped down to kiss her forehead—then she awoke. Then she knew all. Then she knew that they were to part, that he was already surrounded by the guards who were to take him away, that that taking away was to death; and then the old love for him broke out, and about his neck and his fettered hands she hung with such cries and lamentations as made the very walls give back the sounds of agony that woke a keener echo yet in the hearts of those who stood by and listened!

It was mercy to bring such misery as this to an end. The governor of the prison whispered the priest to ask if all was done, and then signing to his men, those two but now united were torn apart, and by those separate ways by which they had come into that terrible place, the husband went his way to death, and the wife back to a home where happiness might never come, but where the voices of her children should bring her comfort in the days that were yet to follow.

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